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SPRING, 1962 VOLUME XXIX, NUMBER 2

CONTENTS

THE NOVEL AGAIN, Steven Marcus 171

FROM THE BLACK NOTEBOOK, Doris Lessing 196

COMMUNIST INTENTIONS, John Strachey 215

POEMS

A WIDOWER, Frederick Seidel 238

WAY-STATION, David Cornel De Jong 239

OPERA COMIQUE, Byron Vazakas 240

MAN ON THE MOON, Wright Morris 241

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE DISCONTENTED CLASSES, David Riesman 250

LONDON LETTER, Richard Wollheim 263

THE "TRUTH", John Henry Raleigh 270

BOOKS

ALEXANDER HERZEN, Joseph Frank 284

POETRY CHRONICLE, R. W. Flint 290

CHOOSING TO CONFORM, Lewis Coser 295

OTHER VOICES: SOVIET COMMENT ON PR'S SPECIAL RUSSIAN ISSUE 300

CORRESPONDENCE 311

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CONTRIBUTORS

"Communist Intentions" is a section of **JOHN STRACHEY's** forthcoming book on the problems of the Cold War. Mr. Strachey represents Dundee West and the Labor Party in the British Parliament.

DORIS LESSING's "From the Black Notebook" is part of her new novel, **The Golden Notebook,** which will be published in June by Simon & Schuster. She has also written a play, to be produced soon in London.

FREDERICK SEIDEL recently won the YMHA Poetry Award which brought with it publication of his book of poems, **Final Solutions.**

WRIGHT MORRIS is in Venice finishing a novel which will appear this Fall.

RICHARD WOLLHEIM teaches at London University and is the author of a recent Fabian pamphlet on art and socialism and a book on F. H. Bradley.

JOHN HENRY RALEIGH is at Princeton this Spring as a Visiting Fellow.

JOSEPH FRANK is now living in Paris and working on a new book. He will be teaching Comparative Literature at Rutgers University next year.

LEWIS COSER, who teaches at Brandeis University, is at work on a new book, **The Sociology of Intellectuals.**

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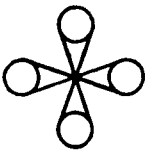

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Steven Marcus

THE NOVEL AGAIN

Fifteen years ago, in a penetrating essay called "Art and Fortune," Lionel Trilling undertook to discuss the state of the novel. Although he willingly conceded that the novel was, so to speak, the sick man of literature, he none the less affirmed his disbelief in the widespread opinion that the novel was either moribund or dead and went on to discuss what he thought to be an important, though disregarded, matter—the place of ideas in the novel. In the course of this essay, Mr. Trilling found occasion to make two predictions. He first asserted that "the novelist of the next decades will not occupy himself with questions of form," explaining himself to mean that "a conscious preoccupation with form at the present time is almost certain to lead the novelist, particularly the young novelist, into limitation." His second prediction, which emerged as a corollary of the first, was that "the novel of the next decades will deal in a very explicit way with ideas." Mr. Trilling had in mind not merely the embodiment of ideas in character and dramatic action, but ideas as themselves, ideas represented in discourse as ideas; and he claimed it was the right and the necessity of the novel to deal with ideas "as directly as it deals with people or terrain or social setting."

Now predictions about the future of art are as a rule so much whistling in the wind. Correct prophecy is likely to be a function of genius, and genius doesn't habitually go with criticism. In any event, the combination when it does appear often proves equivocal. T. S. Eliot's criticism, for example, has a strong predictive strain, but it requires no great effort to discover that in his essays Eliot was largely predicting the poetry he had already written or was about to write.

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One instance of true prediction comes from Toqueville. Twenty-five years before the event, he foresaw not only what the character of the American poet would be but what his poetry would be like as well. If an ancient doctrine of biology could be revived one might remark that Toqueville had been privileged to examine the homunculus that was to become Walt Whitman. But predictions of this kind occur about as often as works like *Democracy in America.* Toqueville's description of the American poet, moreover, followed directly upon his general theory of American society and was an authentic prediction in the sense that it took the form of an inference: certain conditions having been observed, such and such was most likely to be the outcome. Mr. Trilling's prediction, on the other hand, was more in the way of a prescription, though it did not announce itself as one: given the present state of the novel (and the symptoms were distressing—spasms in the prose, compound fracture of the novelistic will, cirrhosis of the point of view), such and such *had* to happen if the novel were to be restored to health. And like most specifics, Mr. Trilling's contained a considerable dosage of hope.

In one sense at least I find myself in sympathy with Mr. Trilling's argument. If his prediction had been fulfilled the novel today would probably be in a much improved state, and we might all have a more definite sense of where we are and what we are, simply because the novelist would have been telling us—presuming he retained his traditional genius for making order and sense out of chaos and nonsense. In fact, the reverse of what Mr. Trilling envisaged has taken place. With all due respect, with certain exceptions to be noted presently, and without prejudice to whomever it may concern, it may be said that within the last fifteen years the novel almost has achieved that curious condition of fineness which T. S. Eliot once ascribed to the mind of Henry James: not an idea violates it. In the presence of such chastity it may be useful to inquire into what has happened and attempt to determine how whatever it is has come about.

The governing tendency in the novel during the last fifteen or twenty years has, I think, been in the direction of poetry. I do not mean by this that novelistic prose has become increasingly poetic and less able to sustain a narrative with all its freight of events and swiftness of movement—although this is probably true. I mean that the novel today seems more and more to be acquiring the formal

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characteristics of poetry, that novels are now being written according to what we can describe as a poetic conception both of experience and of the shape which experience must take.

Of course the novel has almost since its beginning employed certain elements or devices that are recognizably poetic in origin and function. It is important to note, however, that such recognition has become an articulate force only during recent years. Today's student of literature, for example, can hardly read *Wuthering Heights* without at some point being made aware that this novel's true affinities are with the Greek drama and Shakespeare, and not, as twenty-five years ago he would have been taught, with the Gothic romance or the Minerva Press thriller. Nor is anything more striking about the current revival of interest in Dickens than the fact that his novels are regularly being discussed as if they were actually poems. When a number of years ago F. R. Leavis undertook to praise Dickens, the highest tribute he could accord was to call him a great poet. And that is indeed true. All the images of fog and confusion in *Bleak House,* the endlessly varied representations of imprisonment in *Little Dorrit,* the continual presence of the river and the dust-heaps in *Our Mutual Friend*—all of these we now understand not only as part of the narrative design of these novels, but as infusing the most casual of details and bringing into confluence the most wayward and disparate events. Criticism today, in other words, regards these novels as utterances of a mind which has been seized by certain large plastic images, just as a poet's mind is thought to be seized. And it considers the dramatic statement of these novels as being made not primarily through the course of narrative or the conflict of characters, but—to use the dismal terminology—through the elaborate, organic development of a thematic structure of images. *Great Expectations* is now discussed as if it belonged to the same genre as *Timon of Athens* or "The Canonization" or "To His Coy Mistress." And today *Paradise Lost* resembles a novel—or what was once thought of as a novel—more than *Hard Times* does.

But most modern novelists are now seen in this light. We read the novels and stories of Melville and Conrad and Hemingway as we have learned to read lyric poems. We naturally read Flaubert in this manner, since Flaubert was the first novelist to write in deliberate approximation of a poetic principle. We even—God help us—read

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Stendhal and Dostoevsky in this way. We analyse the ideas in Dostoevsky's novels as if they were images; which is to say that we tend to discuss their strictly dramatic function and emphasize their internal coherence, their symmetry, their configurations of resonance. We tend less and less to think of these ideas as having an autonomous existence within the work, or as directing us toward something beyond it, as referring to reality in the way that the ideas in Plato or Hegel or Freud refer to it. At the other end of the spectrum, we find that even Jane Austen, once the most prosaic and genteel of novelists—it used to be said of her in the bad old days that she was a novelist of manners—is now written of as a poet. Much recent criticism of her novels has to do with just such formal considerations of structure and imagery, with their techniques of analogy and complex patterns of irony. It is only a matter of time, I suppose, before "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory," on which she described herself as working "with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour," will itself be proposed as a metaphysical conceit to be put alongside Donne's "bracelet of bright hair about the bone." The possibilities which will at this point disclose themselves we had better leave unexplored.

Although these poetic elements exist abundantly in the great novels of the past, we cannot disregard the fact that it has not been until recently that they were discovered and placed in the forefront of critical discussion. In fact, both the novel and literary criticism have recently been going through an analogous development, though by way of introduction I am describing changes in our critical attitude toward the novel before turning to changes within the novel itself. This analogy is not surprising since the novel and literary criticism exist in close and reciprocal relation. Historically both forms have been characterised by their discursiveness, their impulse to moralize, and their topicality. And throughout their complex and highly sophisticated development into complex and highly sophisticated kinds of discourse both the novel and literary criticism continued to share an insistent concern with the topical and ephemeral, with the immediate social and cultural situation. The novel customarily dealt with that situation directly, whereas criticism dealt with its refracted appearance through literature—which meant that criticism has taken its direction from the literature of the recent past.

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Nevertheless, we should recall that the novel has itself regularly demonstrated its affinities to literary criticism. And as we know, the novel first exercises its imaginative autonomy in connection with a question of literary criticism. *Don Quixote* begins, middles, and ends by asking the primitive, the classical, and the unanswerable critical question: how for good or bad does literature influence our lives? This question, though it is seldom asked so baldly, lurks behind a majority of important critical judgments. It is the only question that can modify, confuse, or overturn "literary" judgments about general considerations and excellences, although it cannot be said simply to take precedence over such judgments. And if we can consider that the modern novel finds a beginning in this question, then it might also be seen bringing itself almost to the end over this same question. It is at the bottom of an incessant debate in Joyce's writings. I refer not only to the theoretical discussions of literature in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* and to the fact that Stephen and Bloom embody different answers to the question, but to the style of *Ulysses,* which in part represents a heroic effort to transcend that question. The virtual hero of *Ulysses* is its style, and by attempting to equate moral heroism with the heroism of literary style, Joyce attempted to put the question I have been referring to aside once and for all, to make it irrelevant. *Ulysses* does not, however, entirely achieve this. *Finnegans Wake* appears to, on the other hand; and it may be that, apart from its intrinsic difficulties, readers continue to be puzzled and disturbed by *Finnegans Wake* because it is the first important work of fiction to which the old, primitive question really seems irrelevant.

One might supply a variety of explanations for these changes in the way we have come to regard the novel. And we could demonstrate in detail how they coordinate with recent developments in the novel itself. For the present, however, I should like to look at two questions. First, the historical identity of the novel continues to change in time. As the great novels of the nineteenth century recede from us—and every circumstance of modern society conspires in accelerating that recession—their character inevitably is modified. What were once burning questions of dispute in the novel no longer possess what can be called an extra-novelistic dimension. The ideas of Rousseau as they are dramatized in Stendhal, the problem of the

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Napoleonic will corrupted by the social values it originally set out to overthrow—the very substance of Balzac's fiction—these can no longer appeal with anything like the directness or relevance they could still command even twenty-five years ago either to the personal interests of readers or to their larger social interests. The passion against social injustice which illuminates Dickens's novels, and which for a hundred years made them an actual force for good in the civilized world, is bound to leave readers less moved as the particular institutions and abuses which he satirized disappear or change or grow more remote. It is even a question, at least for certain groups within our society, whether the passion against injustice is not itself an emotion that has become anachronistic, that belongs to the unenlightened past—and to backward nations like the Soviet Union, for example! Again, for more than two hundred years the English novel may be understood as chafing under a single preoccupation: what it means to be a gentleman. No social, moral, personal, sexual, or political issue was irrelevant to this question or could not be brought into focus by it. Indeed it would not be excessive to suggest that the gentleman is the totemic figure that presides over the major phase of the English novel. In America, the idea of the gentleman could never, naturally, command such monolithic powers of organization; but until recently, I should say, there was still sufficient class feeling, and, perhaps more important, sufficient class memory, to make it possible to discuss this figure without undertaking the work of historical translation—of finding analogies to the past in the present—which now seems necessary. Even in England the question has become musty and remote, at least to the more interesting current novelists. Nevertheless, if the gentleman has at length paid his final tribute to nature, we may trust that—like the late Elia—he will continue his remarkable communications from the far side of the grave. The humour of the thing would be missed.

Similarly, the ideological life of the nineteenth century was dominated by the French Revolution. Under the irresistible power of this cataclysm—it was as Matthew Arnold simply put it, the greatest, the most animating event in human history—the nineteenth century novel was wrought into its distinctive shape and developed its distinctive subject. That subject was the relation of individual persons to authority, to established social and personal power—the

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subject, one might say, of the French Revolution itself. And the attitude of the great nineteenth century novelists toward this question, and toward the society at which it was pointedly directed, seems in most important respects an attitude favorable to the creation of a high art. It was an attitude of passionate ambivalence and contradiction. In Jane Austen and Dostoevsky, in Stendhal and Dickens, in Flaubert and Henry James, the depth to which society is criticized, hated, regarded with derision and disgust, and judged as unworthy to survive is consistently responded to by a desperate affection, a nostalgia for old, passing values, and an often touching weak willingness to compound with the existing world and all its rotten glories. The continuity of the first part of the twentieth century with the nineteenth is evident when we reflect that the attitude of modern writers toward the two great events of the first part of the present era, the first World War and the Russian Revolution, is of a similar ambivalence. Such an attitude seems no longer possible, although we cannot with any certainty attribute this either to the "betrayal" of the Russian Revolution—after all, half the significance of the French Revolution had to do with its "betrayal"—or to the nature of the second World War. Nevertheless, that an interruption in the continuity of attitude has occurred seems unmistakable.

It would be mistaken, however, to consider this inevitable change in the historical character of the nineteenth and early twentieth century novel as pure loss. The wars of the Guelphs and Ghibellines and of the Houses of Lancaster and York are lost to us forever, insofar as any immediacy of interest is concerned. And although one dare not anticipate the day when the arguments in *The Possessed* or the episode of "The Grand Inquisitor" will seem no different in kind from the arguments in *The Republic* or in *Gargantua and Pantagruel,* this too is certain to happen. For some writers, the change will pretty surely lead to redemption. Kipling is a case in point. For some thirty years Kipling has been, from the point of view of a balanced critical appraisal, next to inaccessible. Even the best essays on his writing—those by Edmund Wilson and George Orwell—reveal embarrassment in the very act of praise. Some day, however, Kipling's imperialism will have little more bearing on the reader's feeling for him than Virgil's imperialism has on our attitude toward *The Aeneid,* and readers will take Kipling's intermittent racist beliefs

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in stride, as they take Balzac's royalism or Dostoevsky's pan-Slavism. At that distant date, when current doctrines and passions will have receded into history, Kipling's writings might re-emerge, though their lineaments and proportions will be different from what they seem today. And although it is safer to reserve judgment, one may speculate that *Kim* and *Stalky & Co.* and *The Jungle Books* will then be recognized as minor classics of the language. They will, as we say, receive due recognition as works of art.

Clearly such an affirmation runs the risk of seeming to look down on things from Mount Olympus, when in fact we are peering up at them from the moral sewer that goes by the name of modern civilization. Detachment so-called is a critical virtue and necessity, but there is a point at which even detachment attaches. Detached as he may be, the critic lives in his own time. He is free to deplore and denounce it, but as a critic he is not free to renounce it or to assert that its clamors and confusions—unlike the golden clamors of Periclean Greece or the tapestried confusions of Renaissance Italy—are a mere passing show. He is not free to pontificate against his age by claiming for another age, past or future, a superior degree of reality. This is especially true for the critic of the novel, who must faithfully remind himself that of all the sovereign forms of art, the novel has been the least "artistic," the most dependent upon its extra-artistic powers of immediacy, involvement, and appeal. In one sense the novel may be described as a representation of life in which the loose ends regularly fail to get tied up. This crude co-extensiveness with experience is in fact a traditional point of pride for the novelist; it was a point of pride even for Henry James. In its changing historical identity, then, the novel can often be seen to gain as a work of art to the extent that it loses its connection with immediate and topical experience. And though a similar process takes place in all art and all forms of literature, the novel probably loses most by it. It loses most by virtue of its origins, its historical development and form, and by virtue of its relation to its audience.

My second point concerns what I have represented as the new conventions under which both the great novels of the past and current fiction have come to be read. Briefly we can observe that the last decade and a half has witnessed the complete and final domestication of what was once called the New Criticism. The techniques of close

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reading and analysis of poetic texts originally developed from a two-fold interest—an interest in reclaiming for the present an important tradition of English poetry that had lapsed, and an interest in the new modern poetry which had itself established the first references to that tradition. The New Criticism dramatically altered the nature of reading and the nature of teaching literature in England and America. It created a revolution and has had to suffer a successful revolution's fate—institutionalization, assimilation to older, antithetical habits of thinking, and general dilution of potency. And no critic in his senses, I think, will deny that our university departments of literature, and even the tone of intellectual life in our universities, have not been improved by it.* That the New Critical devices have been directed to the novel recently should be obvious. Such a development was to be expected, as was the fact that in the hands of the New Criticism's epigones—the new technicians, we may call them—the modern novel, in all its fearful symmetry, should seem to have had its fangs drawn and become just another academic tabby cat. Still what has occurred during the last decade and a half would scarcely appear so plain and intelligible, I think, had not the novel developed its own refinements and restrictions.

II

If we examine the novels of interest written both in England and America during the past fifteen years or so, certain diagnostic features seem evident. Beginning with what may appear trivial, we can observe that the length of the novel seems to have contracted. There are, naturally, any number of exceptions, but until rather recently, the usual optimum length of a novel was somewhere in the vicinity of three hundred pages. Today that limit is closer to two hundred pages. Such a reduction in size does not necessarily imply a diminution in intrinsic content; it does indicate, I think, a systematic winnowing out of related but extraneous matter, a disciplined effort of

* As for the older, historical scholarship, as it continues to become increasingly rare its virtues will continue to appear increasingly substantial. Its arrogant disrespect for intellect, its stubborn and gratuitous overvaluation of fact, will seem in comparison with what is replacing them to have had at least a semblance of authentic masculine stupidity—and authority as well, authority having traditionally availed itself of the privilege of mindlessness.

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compression, and an almost exclusive direction of skill toward the dramatic rendering of theme through form. In the writing of William Golding, the most interesting imaginative novelist to have appeared in England during the last decade and a half, this development is strikingly represented.

It hardly seems an accident that Golding began his career as a poet; his first published work was a volume of verse. His novels all develop what for want of a better description we may call the structure of fantasy. They are suspended with considerable uncertainty in space and time; they are all in one way or another parables or fables; and they have become progressively internal and lyrical. Golding's prose is strenuous, compact, angular, extremely oblique and elliptical. It is not to be mistaken for the sort of thing we are familiar with in Virginia Woolf, however, or in Henry Green. These two writers are instances of highly "poeticised" novelistic sensibilities. The distinctive character of their work is that of a single, acutely responsive sensibility operating as a medium in which accidentally related events are registered. In this regard, however, Henry Green's writing apparently suffers from a divided intention; it is often doubtful whether he is trying to achieve the purely fortuitous or the merely inchoate. Some of his novels have either no shape or a purely accidental one; they are typically inconsequent, and sometimes have no discernible beginning, middle, or end. When Green does manage to impose a form on his material, as in *Nothing,* the upshot is likely to be a joke or burlesque of form itself, or as in *Back,* either arbitrary or destructive of what preceded it. But despite his efforts to achieve brilliance and vividness of registration, to liberate the novel from the drudgery of its own conventions, Green's writing still belongs to the older tradition; it represents the traditional novelistic sensibility in an extreme phase of disintegration.

Golding's novels share few of these qualities. They are rigorously organized and heavily controlled: they vex the reader with little that is gratuitous. Whatever freedom or spontaneity may be discovered in them resembles the freedom we find in a dramatic poem—it is the result of a deftly executed conception, refers dialectically to that conception, and if it is successful ultimately subserves and enriches it. In Golding's novels there is scarcely a local touch or detail of prose which does not perform humble service toward this proud

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and absolute end. When Coleridge objected to Wordsworth's "matter-of-factness" and "accidentality" as contravening the essence of poetry, he implied that these were the qualities of a writer of prose, a biographer or novelist. Golding's novels escape these strictures: so that makes him more or a poet than Wordsworth, though less of a novelist. Such are the uses of critical theory, and the usages of history.

Golding's first novel, *Lord of the Flies,* is set on an imaginary island in the South Seas at some unspecified time in the future; an atomic war has begun and the inhabitants of the island consist solely of boys who have been evacuated from England—their plane, we gather, had crash-landed, killing only the crew. The action of the novel concerns the way in which the boys go about arranging their island life together; it describes in vivid, poignant detail how the conventions, restraints, and taboos of civilized society are gradually sloughed off. That the boys have just been saved from a world destroying itself is a choice ironic background—and has the effect of a silent, invisible Chorus of Furies. Inexorably the boys revert to primitive habits of thought and belief, and to primitive, savage customs, though there is no external necessity for their doing so. In this connection it may be remarked that Golding is perhaps the first English novelist to use with entire naturalness the findings and doctrines of modern anthropology and psychoanalysis; they have been thoroughly assimilated to his vision of experience. They function, however, in poetic terms and not as ideas in the explicit sense referred to at the beginning of this discussion; there seems no compelling reason why they should.

At the end of *Lord of the Flies,* and after a number of dreadful things have happened, the boys are rescued. The naval officer who has arrived to take them off the island quickly grasps the situation and, in a grave state of shock, mutters, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys—you're all British aren't you?—would have been able to put up a better show than that—I mean—" and he trails off into inarticulateness. The extreme irony of this last page shifts the focus of the novel and reminds us that the narrative has been developing along several related lines of meaning. The conclusions of Golding's novels, in fact, like the conclusions of many poems, turn our attention back upon the work that has just been completed and present us with still another means of contemplating

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it. Yet *Lord of the Flies* is Golding's most "novelistic" work of fiction. It is also the only recent novel of imaginative originality that I am aware of which implies that society, insane and self-destroying as it undeniably is, is necessary. Despite its striking freshness and seriousness, however, Golding's notion of society, in this novel and in his others, is rudimentary, restricted, and strangely abstract. In Golding's novels society as we know it is largely an idea, a confused memory recollected in the midst of catastrophe; while the pre-social and the post-social have become the paramount actualities.

From the post-historic future of *Lord of the Flies,* Golding turned to the pre-historic past, and his second novel, *The Inheritors,* is about a family of pre-historic creatures. The conception is daring, since it could so easily lapse into the ludicrous or maudlin. (Consider what it would be like were the last book of *Gulliver's Travels* written from the point of view of one of the Yahoos. On second thought, consider the same from the point of view of a Houyhnhnm). It is a measure of Golding's artistic sincerity and his virtuoso talents that he makes this story credible and touching. His ancient group of "people," as they call themselves, are food-gatherers, have only the rudiments of a language—though they seem to possess a kind of group consciousness—have only fragmentary powers of memory, and are unaggressive, affectionate, and innocent in the radical sense. They are brought into contact with another group of creatures who are equipped with a primitive technology, weapons, art, and even liquor, and who thereupon proceed to exterminate the brutes. Prepared as we are, it still gives us a jolt to realize that the pre-human creatures are being exterminated by the "Inheritors," who are our ancestors and ourselves, human beings.

Golding's third novel, *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* (published in England as *Pincher Martin*) moves still further in this a-historical, a-temporal direction. It is about a man thrown off a torpedoed destroyer into the North Atlantic and then cast up on a single, bare rock in the midst of the ocean, where he is slowly driven by exposure and illness into delirium and insanity. In the course of his disintegration, fragments of his past heave themselves up into consciousness, and though we are given no sense of the chronological shape of his life, certain images and symbols which recur obsessively in his recollections reveal a familiar kind of unpleasant character.

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Eventually he seems to be swept off the rock by a storm and is presumably drowned. The final chapter of the story, however, throws everything into reverse again. Martin's body is swept on shore, and we learn that he is still wearing the seaboots which we had been led to believe he took off shortly after he was first thrown into the sea. It suddenly appears that the entire novel takes place in the mind of a drowning man, and that this elaborate story of survival, retrospection, and madness, which covers about two hundred pages, occupies the interval of time between his first sensations of drowning on page one and his last twitch of delirious memory or sensation—whatever brief interval of time that may be.

Impressive as it is, *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* seems less successful than Golding's first two novels. And though it is altogether clear that the ending is no mere trick, there is perhaps something of the grand trick in it. It suggests an excessive reliance on technique or form, as if either of them could finally do the work of the intelligence. It reminds one of how in an earlier phase of the novel's history, Conrad or Ford, when they needed to extricate themselves from some difficulty of moral judgment, occasionally resorted to a clever manipulation of point of view. But it reminds one even more of how poets sometimes try to resolve what they have set in motion by introducing at the end of their poems a new consideration which turns the poem upside down, or ask some question which casts the whole enterprise into doubt or ambiguity.

Golding's fourth and most recent novel, *Free Fall,* strikes off on a new course. Though still exploiting virtuoso devices for the direct presentation of experience, for bringing conscious and unconscious processes simultaneously before the reader, and for rendering past and present as co-existent, it attempts to deal with the life history of a single man, an artist named Samuel Mountjoy. The representation of a complex, continuously developing person, however, turns out to be a labor that Golding is unequal to. He fails because his imagination seems unable to encompass society as we know it now and because those parts of experience which we think of as developing or developmental are almost impossible to deal with apart from the experience of society. In a sense they *are* our experience of society. Thus, although the theme of *Free Fall* is development, its style is essentially discontinuous, and the discrete episodes of which it is

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made float about in interstellar darkness. It is as if Wordsworth had tried to write *The Prelude* in the style of Blake's prophetic books, or Dickens had tried to write *David Copperfield* in the style of *Watt*. Nevertheless, Golding's failure in this novel is no discredit, for he was aspiring to a difficult achievement: to create for the present post-modern era a work which would also satisfy the traditional novelistic purpose. That failure suggests again, however, the rather narrow limits of his range.

Before turning to the American scene, I should mention Muriel Spark, whose elegantly compact and highly wrought fantasies—such as *Momento Mori, The Ballad of Peckham Rye,* and *The Go-Away Bird*—are examples of this development, though they are much more modest and altogether less serious works than Golding's. It has been said in praise of her fictions, by the way, that they curiously resemble metaphysical religious poems. It may be replied that if John Donne's poems were praised as curiously resembling modern novels, one might not be so prepared to accept this as a good thing, either for John Donne, poetry, or the modern novel. Nevertheless, if for purposes of contrast we consult the work of Kingsley Amis or Angus Wilson, two novelists whose allegiances go to the older fictional idea, our sense of the precariousness of the current situation is renewed.

In America the same tendencies exist, and one can find no better instance of them than the writings of Bernard Malamud. Malamud's first novel, *The Natural,* is nominally about baseball, but it has about the same relation to *You Know Me Al* as *Lord of the Flies* does to *A High Wind in Jamaica.* In this first novel, baseball, as one might expect, is represented as a legendary kind of behavior. Moreover, *The Natural* is written with reference to the myth of the Holy Grail, and in particular out of an elaborate system of references to Jesse Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and, secondarily, to *The Waste Land.* Although this sounds as if *The Natural* were cooked up in the literary pot, it must be added that the allusions are in no way obtrusive and that the novel reads freshly and directly, though something at its center remains obscurely unrealized.

Malamud's second novel, *The Assistant,* is equally representative even though it takes place in a grocery store in Brooklyn during the depression. These tough sociological facts, however, are handled with utmost delicacy and circumspection by the author, as if they were

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marked "fragile." And as an expert on the matter once observed, the Jews who people Malamud's fiction bear a very special and indirect relation to the actual historical Jewish character. Malamud abstracts them from their historical circumstances and treats them poetically and mythically. The theme of *The Assistant* is equally mythical and is in fact the theme of all Malamud's novels to date. These novels are about the experience of re-birth; in each of them a prematurely oldish young man, whose earlier life is cloaked in darkness, but has included a dismal or tragic experience of failure, is given a second chance to make something of his life and redeem his disreputable past. In this connection the analogy between Golding's writing and Malamud's takes an odd dialectical turn. Golding's novels all deal with experiences of regression, disintegration, and death, and are violent fantasies of an unregenerate world, whereas the imaginative impulse behind Malamud's writing has attached itself to the idea of redemption and resurrection through suffering. Consider: in the year 1961 a former Oxonian, officer in the Royal Navy, and school-master, whose main interest outside of writing is sailing, writes novels under the influence of *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and Its Discontents;* while a New York Jew discovers *Pilgrim's Progress* in a grocery store, creates Jews who are dead-ringers for Christian saints, and finds the Chapel Perilous in Ebbetts Field. The wonders of nature never cease.

Like Golding's *Free Fall,* Malamud's recently published third novel attempts to deal with areas of experience that his earlier writing avoided. In *A New Life* Malamud has undertaken to represent the life of a provincial college community and to record its qualities of absurdity and unreality. But he has done so almost solely by attempting to register its banal actualities rather flatly most of the time, without transfiguring them in his magical distorting-mirror. Now the life of academic society is beyond doubt fantastic, and it is true that the fantasy, the wildness, the astounding irreality of it spring out of the multitude of dreary and humdrum details and duties that constitute its daily existence: the nightmare of academic life is inseparable from its terrible ordinariness. In the past this fantasia of the prosaic—society itself—was the meat and drink of novelists. But in Malamud it seems precisely the commonplace, daily reality that is elusive; his highly developed and specialized gift seems as yet unable

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to reproduce the reality out of which the fantastic takes shape, although it is almost always able brilliantly to do the reverse—that is, to render the fantasy in which the reality takes shape. No novel by Malamud could be without its serious interest, but the parts of *A New Life* that are most impressive, most "real," are the more private, claustral, and interior relations.

Malamud's first two novels were short and compact, and it is no coincidence that some of his best writing has been done in the medium of the short story. His justly celebrated "The Magic Barrel" is a kind of lyric poem in prose—by which I do not mean that it is any less a work of fiction, any less a story. If we compare Malamud's stories to Joyce's, the distinction I wish to make is at once clear. The stories of *Dubliners* are often spoken of as being constructed on formally poetic principles, and Joyce's notion of the epiphany is properly enlisted in support of this interpretation. Yet the prose of *Dubliners* somehow resists that idea. In its harshness, its flatness, its general, deliberate tonelessness, it imposes itself on the reader with impersonal masculine force, calling attention to itself as prose and nothing more, and identifying itself with the naturalistic tradition. Joyce himself called it "a style of scrupulous meanness." Moreover, the great poetic leaps and illuminations in certain of these stories are to a considerable degree validated by the aggressive, unpoetical insistence of their prose. Similar observations might be made about the writing of Kafka. In Malamud's stories on the other hand, the prose, though spare, is spare in a lyrical way, gracefully compact of metaphor, and of a piece with the poetic intention of their author's idea.

Another instance of this development in America can be found in the writing of Flannery O'Connor. In theme, style, and structure, Miss O'Connor's fantastic accounts of primitive religion and violence in the South seem to belong to this tendency in fiction.

Let me state at this point that these observations make no pretense to inclusiveness; any number of important writers cannot be accounted for or understood by the general argument they advance. Saul Bellow, for example, a writer whose gift is as considerable as his range, is among the few novelists today who are masters of several imaginative styles. Yet Bellow's finest piece of writing, the work in which his remarkable talents are most fully realized, is one which most resembles the kind of fiction I have been discussing. His

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superb short novel, *Seize the Day,* may in the present context be taken as an exception which proves the miserable rule.

III

That this development is not altogether new but has its roots in the tradition of the novel should be sufficiently clear. Nevertheless, this kind of fiction has never before occupied so prominent a part of the field nor claimed so large a proportion of the better writers. The novelists whom I have mentioned are writers of vitality and intelligence, and I do not want to disparage their achievement or discredit anyone's admiration of it. And yet it must be recognized, I think, that they are writing in what can only be judged as a minor mode. The very qualities of exquisiteness, restraint, and propriety of form which distinguish their writing from that of other and lesser figures also serve to set them off from what has been the major tradition of the novel. If the type of fiction I have been describing were currently competing with other types, either traditional or equally innovating, which gave evidence of similar vitality, then the situation would be quite different.

But what is apparent is that a break in the tradition of the novel seems to be taking place. Opinions will of course differ over the date at which the break begins and over the reasons for its continuance, but at this late hour few will question the fact that an interruption has occurred. It may even have persisted long enough to have affected the novel's audience and to have brought about a change in what can be thought of as the sociology of novel-reading—at least in America, which does not have the English advantage of a firm tradition of intelligent but second-rate fiction.

In this connection, I should like to speak from personal experience, for I first became aware of what seemed to me a change in the ranks of novel-readers in the course of my duties as a teacher. In my classes during the last few years I have noticed that when I chose to illustrate a point by comparing or contrasting it to something in a modern novel, I met a curious response. It is nearer the truth to say that I met no response, and that my students of recent years, unlike their predecessors, have been unfamiliar with the general range and canon of the modern novel. Since I like to think of myself as a conscientious teacher—which means, I suppose, that I

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become nervous when students seem to respond in new and mysterious ways—I instituted an unsystematic inquiry into the matter. What I learned was that my students—almost all of them seniors planning careers having something to do with literature—no longer read novels as a matter of course. The novels they do read are by and large either assigned reading for classes in English literature or collateral reading for some other field of study, such as history and sociology. (I might add that a similar poll among graduate students at the School of Letters in Indiana University yielded similar results. And many colleagues have had the same experience with their students.)

If this were to represent anything of a general tendency, and if it were to persist, then it is possible that we will have reached a new stage in the novel's long crisis. For more than one hundred and fifty years the novel has been the natural mode of reading in our culture. And though there has been intermittent talk of the novel's decline—and with increased frequency over the past forty-odd years—such talk has never been known to interrupt the widespread habit of reading novels. I say habit, but I really think it more accurate to say that our culture was addicted to the reading of novels. The causes of addiction naturally varied. There was, for example, the old, unmodern passion, as we find it represented in Colonel Newcome, who invariably took *The Spectator, Don Quixote,* and *Sir Charles Grandison* on his travels because, as he said, he liked to be in the company of gentlemen. A more advanced phase of addiction is confessed by Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey,* who excuses away his illicit passion by describing novels as works "in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humor are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." Which of us has not mouthed a similar piety and then turned to read some piece of fictional trash with shameless and undiscriminating appetite? But of course such ritual perversity is possible only if the novel is a going thing, only if the conventions which inform popular and vulgar fiction maintain a vital connection with that fiction which is art.

Then the novel was read as much for its quality of truth as for its quantity of fantasy—truth being, as Jane Austen once observed, very excusable in an Historian. The novelist was looked to

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as historian, biographer, and sociologist: he was an explorer in the *terra incognita* of modern society. And his fantastic reports on life among the cannibals—whether these were the very rich or the very poor, the criminal or the insane, the blessed or the damned, the physically beautiful or the spiritually lame, halt, and blind—these reports were read with what amounted to infant credulity. For the novelist's fantasy of truth corresponded to the reader's fantasy of vicarious liberation. When Flaubert said, *"Madame Bovary, c'est moi,"* he affirmed not only an essential condition of the novelist's relation to his work, but one of the reader's relation to the novel as well. Finally, the novel was read for the largest moral and spiritual reasons. Lawrence once said that he wrote because he wanted "folk—English folk—to alter, and have more sense." And many folk read the novel in order to alter their lives. This is the most modern of demands made upon the novel—a demand for nothing less than salvation. And as such it is no less excessive and impossible than the demand made during the nineteenth century that the novel include within its purpose the reformation of society. Absurd and excessive as they are, these demands at least recognized the fact that we and our civilization unquestionably need saving. And so long as the novel was able to embody such demands, to envisage a life beyond our present condition of mortal terror and blank dismay—even to the extremity of an apocalypse, if there was hope of being purified in the destruction—so long could it be assured of its own perpetuation and its readers' fanatic loyalty.

This seems not to have happened, as we all know. If it is true that even the habit of novel-reading is becoming attenuated, then it may be inferred that this is a response to what the novel has not been able to do. For readers today to maintain a living connection with Proust and Gide and Mann and Joyce and Fitzgerald, with all the figures who fifteen or twenty years ago were still current in their own right, there will have to be more novelists who are capable of keeping that connection alive. I do not mean novelists who write like Lawrence or Kafka or Joyce, or write novels like theirs; the kind of novelist I have in mind would in some sense reject the great moderns, just as the great moderns rejected their nineteenth century predecessors. The paradox that only through the opposition of generations can civilization advance seems to hold true for its art,

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its literature—in the modern world, at least, continuity with the past is maintained only through the continual rejection of it. "Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead," writes Blake, and then "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom"—and we believe it. There is, in other words, no short cut to beatitude; before the past can be reclaimed it must be repudiated. Whatever may prevent this process from taking place—whether it be the scarcity of genius or some convergence of historical or cultural events or all of these—the failure of creative repudiation entails the failure of continuity. The present condition of the novel, I believe, can be roughly described in these terms. Continuity may have been broken—at the very least it appears to be seriously damaged—and it is impossible to foresee how or when a connection will resume. One thing that seems clear is that the novel has nearly ceased to give us what we need: an adequate notion of what it is like to be alive today, why we are the way we are, and what might be done to remedy our bad situation.

What has prevented the novel from doing this is a perplexing question: the causes are obscure and for that very reason it is tempting to speculate upon them. But my speculations will have to be unargued, perfunctory, and merely suggestive.

There are, to my knowledge, two major explanations of the novel's deteriorating state. The first was proposed almost forty years ago by Ortega y Gasset, and states that with the great nineteenth and early twentieth century figures the novel fulfilled itself and was thus exhausted of further possibilities. To offer up the novel as dead of its own success is an elegant plausibility—like having your baked funeral meats and eating them too. The second explanation has been cogently set forth by Mary McCarthy in a recent essay called "The Fact in Fiction." This argument maintains that the reality of contemporary experience is so monstrous and aberrant, and so annihilates the merely human, that the novel has no way of reducing or accomodating it to a comprehensible vision of life. There is much to be said for this view, including the curious irony that a century ago Balzac used similar language to argue an opposite case. Prose, Balzac wrote, "has no other resource than the actual." But in the modern world, he continued, "the actual is so terrible that in itself it is able

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to wrestle with the sublimity of poetry." Such a paradox makes comment not only on changes in actuality but on changes in attitudes towards that actuality.

Both these theories carry a large share of truth, I think, but no single explanation of a historical process so complex can achieve a persuasiveness commensurate to our sense of that complexity. Without wishing to oppose or dismiss either theory I should like to put them aside now and address the problem from another perspective.

Novels are not written out of thin air, and novelists, unlike God, do not generate their ideas *ex nihilo*. If we complain that novels fail to provide an adequate description and interpretation of contemporary experience, or that they have ceased to deal with ideas, we must also admit that they are not alone in their barren and unfed condition but reflect the general state of intellectual culture in our time. But so does the fact that we must remind ourselves of such time-worn truths as Matthew Arnold's notion that the precondition for a vivid and healthy culture and a morally significant literature is a strong and continuous exercise of the critical intellect—and it should be remembered that Arnold did not exclude general criticism of society from the intention of criticism. Some years ago Randall Jarrell wrote that we live in an age of criticism, but he wrote wryly and meant literary criticism, an enterprise which may be said to have prospered through lack of competition. In addition, the dominant form which literary criticism chose for itself in recent years was distrustful of ideas or interests which might be thought of as "extrinsic" to the work under scrutiny. As for a coherent body of serious and significant critical thinking about modern culture, the closer one looks the less one finds. And as in the case of the novel, we cannot regard this situation from fancy moral postures, as if it were a simple failure of nerve or will, or a sudden depravity of intelligence, such as capitulation to the favors of an affluent society: it is a general condition we are faced with.*

A good example of this state of affairs is the most widely read work of sociology written during the past fifteen years, David Ries-

* The reader will note that the argument in the last part of this essay is phrased in terms which refer more immediately to the situation in America than in England. It is probably not so different, although the vigorous assertion of difference which is general in England today must be taken into account.

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man's *The Lonely Crowd*. As far as criticism goes, one might say of this highly original and intelligent study that the most critical thing about it is its title. At some point during its preparation a decision was reached which seems to sum up the tone of the following years. For alongside the impressive description and analysis of the two basic types of modern character, the inner-directed and the other-directed, there ran an elaborate refusal to judge between the two. There were certainly all kinds of useful reasons to be advanced for this decision, but the net effect of it, I think, was to deny the evidence of the senses and the intellect. The escape hatch was found, as it so often is, in a third term, "autonomy," and in the idea of an autonomous man. This distinguished personage was a synthetic creation transcending both types, was projected as a hopeful vision of the future, and was in short a bit incredible, less an ideal than a myth. One might do better by betting blindly at a horse race—the horses at least exist. But such are the consequences of suspending critical judgment, for whatever reasons and in whatever cause.

But lest we be misguided into supposing that in such times as these the simple and stalwart determination to be critical will inspire the triumph of intelligence, we might remind ourselves of such a book as Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*. Coming a decade after *The Lonely Crowd* and being actuated by very different impulses, it expresses all the bitter, negative and apocalyptic wisdom of the era, just as ten years before Mr. Riesman's work had revealed the disposition toward compromise, reconciliation, and justification in relation to society which intellectuals at that moment wanted to affirm. And again, after a brilliant and moving analysis of the manifold afflictions which characterize the malady we call modern society, Mr. Brown, like Mr. Riesman before him, makes a leap in the direction of some fantastic, unrealizable future—though it is to his credit that he warns us to willingly suspend our common sense. He looks forward to "the abolition of repression," and to a society in which there will be a general "resurrection of the body." The new man who thus walks erect will also simultaneously crawl on all fours, since he will still inhabit the "polymorphously perverse body of childhood." This creature is not simply incredible; he is almost unthinkable, not to say inconceivable. And yet there is a sad correspondence of opposites between him and Riesman's autonomous man. Be-

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tween these two mythical diagrams of the human future—autonomous character on the one hand, and resurrection into infantile sexuality on the other—the mind of the age oscillates in bleak and sickened discontent.

I have been implying that recent developments in the novel—the movement toward poetic form, the inability to deal with society, the poverty of ideas—are deeply connected with a general weakening of the critical function in recent years. And although both conditions have extensive histories, both have been exacerbated by the larger circumstance in which all our cultural transactions now take place. I refer, of course, to the Cold War, conceiving it not as a catch-word of journalism but as the new phase of Western culture.

Sooner or later, I suppose, the Cold War is going to be charged with everything, but I trust she will not mind if at this point I attach my small share of blame along with that of others. A Cold War is the continued pursuit of war by other means. Critical thinking, straitened, arduous, and problematical under the best of conditions, becomes under conditions of war, and especially under the autarchy of modern war, that much more so. When a society finds itself in a state of siege, when it discovers itself really threatened for the first time from the outside, it necessarily organizes itself to engage the forces that oppose it. Its intellectual and critical energies are marshalled as a matter of course, to the inevitable detriment of the central tradition of criticism. It is a rare society indeed which will in such circumstances continue to support a current of thinking whose historic purpose has been to point out the flaws, inadequacies, and contradictions of that society—and particularly if such criticism appears to coincide with the enemy's accusations. I am not alluding to specific episodes or manifestations but have in mind those massive and insidious pressures, conscious and unconscious, within any society so beset to turn its energies of mind and passion away from examining itself. Even those who argue the necessity of this process should remain aware that certain necessities can prove fatal. That this kind of necessity is fatal to culture is almost certain, culture and art having regularly been the first luxuries to go under conditions of protracted tension and war; that it tends to make the complex, critical attitude of mind seem indecisive, irrelevant, and even traitorous is equally undeniable; and that it may be causing grave damage

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to the spirit of the society ostensibly being protected seems likely.

However we regard the Cold War, there should be little need to buck ourselves up with pride in it. Since the effect of the Cold War has been to syphon off a considerable amount of critical intelligence for the struggle against Communism and in defense of our own system, then there should be little wonder over the failure of criticism to produce, in Arnold's phrase, "a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power." And there should be equally little wonder over the present state of the novel. American novelists, unfortunately, cannot be expected to write novels which are critical of the Soviet Union. Rastignac looks down on his own Paris—not a foreign capital—and says, "It's war between us now" and then descends to conquer those corrupt splendors which are in turn to destroy him. And the dilemma of *1984* was that it *had* to be about England. For the novelist's quarrel is by its nature with his own society, as is the critic's—and their function, like that of all frustrated lovers, is to prosecute that quarrel. When that quarrel is, for whatever reason, suspended, diverted, or thwarted, there will inevitably follow, to use the words of a great American critic, the failure of distinction, the failure of style, the failure of knowledge, the failure of thought.

It is certainly true that the current state of the novel and of critical thinking originate in conditions which long antedate the last fifteen or twenty years; the history of their distress is depressingly rich and complex. The Cold War has in all probability served mainly to intensify and accelerate earlier tendencies, a development which might not in any event have been stopped. Nor am I saying that the contemporary situation is monolithic; my effort has been to describe a certain general tone and tendency. Seen from the inside any culture is apt to resemble gang-warfare, and as far as ours is concerned it is becoming apparent that the uneasy truce of the last fifteen years is in the process of suffering minor violations.

At one point, however, the Cold War has acted upon the novel directly. To put it simply, the Cold War is cold, it freezes things up, it fixes them in place. In particular it tends to freeze ideas, and (witness the work of David Riesman and Norman O. Brown) one of the ideas it has stopped dead in its tracks is the idea of the future. Under the conditions of the Cold War we perforce think of the

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future—our future, that is—as essentially unchanged: barring disaster, we are in for more of the same, which is to say that we cannot think of a future at all. No situation could be more subversive of the novel. Historically the novel came into existence as a major form of expression at the same time that the idea of the future, a different and possible human future, began to be realized. One of the enduring generic images of the novel is that of a young man forging madly ahead, intent upon grasping the newness, the novelty, the novel-ness that lies before him. When Hegel looked out of his window in Jena and saw Napoleon riding by, he thought he beheld the world-spirit on horseback; until recently, most novelists have had the same vision, or believed they did. And though novels end in numberless ways, they have favored one image consistently. How many novels can we recall which end with the hero, his back turned to the reader, walking off into the distance. That distance is of course his future, his unrealized possibilities, and those of the reader and society. No idea has had greater moral power in modern civilization than the idea of the fulfillable, earthly future: and its destructive power has been as wild as its power to create. And no idea has been more substantive to the modern novel. It is a fact which supplies us with one more reason for regarding *Finnegans Wake* with what amounts to the anxiety of premonition. It is the first important work of fiction to expel the future, for it runs in a circle.

Thomas Hardy once confessed to an admirer that it doesn't take very much intelligence to be pessimistic. The temptation to think or write under the assurance of pessimism is at the present moment acute—and is on that account to be resisted. Our embattled society still exists, novelists and critics are alive, and all have their appointed work to do. We live in our own times and cannot foresee the future, though we are all hostages to it. And our best hope of redemption still lies in the degree to which we can commit ourselves to the intelligent assessment of the world we inhabit—whether interested or disinterested. Only then, I think, can we resume working out those lines which will help the future, when it comes, to find its direction. "That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity."

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Doris Lessing

FROM THE BLACK NOTEBOOK

Breakfast was over, it was about ten in the morning, and we were glad to have something to fill our time until lunch. A short way past the hotel a track turned off the main road at right angles and wandered ruttily over the veld, following the line of an earlier African footpath. This track led to the Roman Catholic Mission about seven miles off in the wilderness. Sometimes the Mission car came in for supplies; sometimes farm laborers went by in groups to or from the Mission, which ran a large farm, but for the most part the track was empty. All that country was high-lying sandveld, undulating, broken sharply here and there by kopjes. When it rained the soil seemed to offer resistance, not welcome. The water danced and drummed in a fury of white drops to a height of two or three feet over the hard soil, but an hour after the storm, it was already dry again and the gullies and vleis were running high and noisy. It had rained the previous night so hard that the iron roof of the sleeping block had shaken and pounded over our heads, but now the sun was high, the sky unclouded, and we walked beside the tarmac over a fine crust of white sand which broke drily under our shoes to show the dark wet underneath.

There were five of us that morning, I don't remember where the others were. Perhaps it was a week-end when only five of us had come down to the hotel. Paul carried the rifle, looking every inch a sportsman and smiling at himself in this role. Jimmy was beside him, clumsy, fattish, pale, his intelligent eyes returning always to Paul, humble with desire, ironical with pain at his situation. I, Willi and Maryrose came along behind. Willi carried a book. Maryrose and I wore holiday clothes—colored dungarees and shirts.

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Maryrose wore blue dungarees and a rose-colored shirt. I wore dungarees and a white shirt.

As soon as we turned off the main road on to the sand track we had to walk slowly and carefully, because this morning after the heavy rain there was a festival of insects. Everything seemed to riot and crawl. Over the low grasses a million white butterflies with greenish white wings hovered and lurched. They were all white, but of different sizes. That morning a single species had hatched or sprung or crawled from their crysallises, and were celebrating their freedom. And on the grass itself, and all over the road were a certain species of brightly-colored grasshopper, in couples. There were millions of them too.

"And one grasshopper jumped on the other grasshopper's back," observed Paul's light but grave voice, just ahead. He stopped. Jimmy, beside him, obediently stopped too. We came to a standstill behind them both. "Strange," said Paul, "but I've never understood the inner or concrete meaning of that song before." It was grotesque, and we were all not so much embarrassed, as awed. We stood laughing, but our laughter was too loud. In every direction, all around us, were the insects, coupling. One insect, its legs firmly planted on the sand, stood still; while another, apparently identical, was clamped firmly on top of it, so that the one underneath could not move. Or an insect would be trying to climb on top of another, while the one underneath remained still, apparently trying to aid the climber whose earnest or frantic heaves threatened to jerk both over sideways. Or a couple, badly-matched, would topple over, and the one that had been underneath would right itself and stand waiting while the other fought to resume its position, or another insect, apparently identical, ousted it. But the happy or well-mated insects stood all around us, one above the other, with their bright round idiotic black eyes staring. Jimmy went off into fits of laughter, and Paul thumped him on the back. "These extremely vulgar insects do not merit our attention," observed Paul. He was right. One of these insects, or half a dozen, or a hundred would have seemed attractive, with their bright paint-box colors, half-submerged in thin emerald grasses. But in thousands, crude green and crude red, with the black blank eyes staring—they were absurd, obscene, and above all, the very emblem of stupidity. "Much better watch the

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butterflies," said Maryrose, doing so. They were extraordinarily beautiful. As far as we could see, the blue air was graced with white wings. And looking down into a distant vlei, the butterflies were a white glittering haze over green grass.

"But my dear Maryrose," said Paul, "you are doubtless imagining in that pretty way of yours that these butterflies are celebrating the joy of life, or simply amusing themselves, but such is not the case. They are merely pursuing vile sex, just like these ever-so-vulgar grasshoppers."

"How do you know?" enquired Maryrose, in her small voice, very earnest; and Paul laughed his full-throated laugh which he knew was so attractive, and fell back and came beside her, leaving Jimmy alone in front. Willi, who had been squiring Maryrose, gave way to Paul and came to me, but I had already moved forward to Jimmy, who was forlorn.

"It really *is* grotesque," said Paul, sounding genuinely put out. We looked where he was looking. Among the army of grasshoppers were two obtrusive couples. One was an enormous powerful-looking insect, like a piston with its great spring-like legs, and on its back a tiny ineffectual mate, unable to climb high enough up. And next to it, the position reversed: a tiny bright pathetic grasshopper was straddled by, dwarfed, almost crushed by an enormous powerful driving insect. "I shall try a small scientific experiment," announced Paul. He stepped carefully among the insects to the grasses at the side of the road, laid down his rifle, and pulled a stem of grass. He went down on one knee in the sand, brushing insects aside with an efficient and indifferent hand. Neatly he levered the heavy-bodied insect off the small one. But it instantly sprang back to where it was with a most surprisingly determined single leap. "We need two for this operation," announced Paul. Jimmy was at once tugging at a grass-stem, and took his place beside him, although his face was wrenched with loathing at having to bend down so close to the swarm. The two young men were now kneeling on the sandy road, operating their grass-stems. I and Willi and Maryrose stood and watched. Willi was frowning. "How frivolous," I remarked, ironical. Although, as usual, we were not on particularly good terms that morning, Willi allowed himself to smile at me and said with real amusement: "All the same, it is interesting." And we smiled at each other, with

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affection and with pain because these moments were so seldom. And across the kneeling boys Maryrose watched us, with envy and pain. She was seeing a happy couple and feeling shut out. I could not bear it, and I went to Maryrose, abandoning Willi. Maryrose and I bent over the backs of Paul and Jimmy and watched.

"Now," said Paul. Again he lifted his monster off the small insect. But Jimmy was clumsy and failed, and before he could try again Paul's big insect was back in position. "Oh, you idiot," said Paul, irritated. It was an irritation he usually suppressed, because he knew Jimmy adored him. Jimmy dropped the grass-stem and laughed painfully; tried to cover up his hurt—but by now Paul had grasped the two stems, had levered the two covering insects, large and small, off the two others, large and small, and now they were two well-matched couples, two big insects together and two small ones.

"There," said Paul. "That's the scientific approach. How neat. How easy. How satisfactory."

There we all stood, the five of us, surveying the triumph of commonsense. And we all began to laugh again, helplessly, even Willi; because of the utter absurdity of it. Meanwhile all around us thousands and thousands of painted grasshoppers were getting on with the work of propagating their kind without any assistance from us. And even our small triumph was soon over, because the large insect that had been on top of the other large insect, fell off, and immediately the one which had been underneath mounted him or her.

"Obscene," said Paul gravely.

"There is no evidence," said Jimmy, trying to match his friend's light grave tone, but failing, since his voice was always breathless, or shrill, or too facetious: "There is no evidence that in what we refer to as nature things are any better-ordered than they are with us. What evidence have we that all these—miniature troglodites are nicely sorted out male above female? Or even—" he added daringly, on his fatally wrong note "—male with female at all? For all we know, this is a riot of debauchery, males with males, females with females . . ." He petered out in a gasp of laughter. And looking at his heated, embarrassed, intelligent face, we all knew that he was wondering why it was that nothing he ever said, or could say, sounded easy, as when Paul said it. For if Paul had made that speech, as he might very well have done, we would all have been laughing.

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Instead of which we were uncomfortable, and were conscious that we were hemmed in by these ugly scrambling insects.

Suddenly Paul sprang over and trod deliberately, first on the monster couple, whose mating he had organised, and then on the small couple.

"Paul," said Maryrose, shaken, looking at the crushed mess of colored wings, eyes, white smear.

"A typical response of a sentimentalist," said Paul, deliberately parodying Willi—who smiled, acknowledging that he knew he was being mocked. But now Paul said seriously: "Dear Maryrose, by tonight, or to stretch a point, by tomorrow night, nearly all these things will be dead—just like your butterflies."

"Oh no," said Maryrose, looking at the dancing clouds of butterflies with anguish, but ignoring the grasshoppers. "But why?"

"Because there are too many of them. What would happen if they all lived? It would be an invasion. The Mashopi Hotel would vanish under a crawling mass of grasshoppers, it would be crushed to the earth, while inconceivably ominous swarms of butterflies danced a victory dance over the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Boothby and their marriageable daughter."

Maryrose, offended and pale, looked away from Paul. We all knew she was thinking about her dead brother. At such moments she wore a look of total isolation, so that we all longed to put our arms around her.

Yet Paul continued, and now he began by parodying Stalin: "It is self-evident, it goes without saying—and in fact there is no need at all to say it, so why should I go to the trouble?—However, whether there is any need to say a thing or not is clearly besides the point. As is well-known, I say, nature is prodigal. Before many hours are out, these insects will have killed each other by fighting, biting, deliberate homicide, suicide, or by clumsy copulation. Or they will have been eaten by birds which even at this moment are waiting for us to remove ourselves so that they can begin their feast. When we return to this delightful pleasure resort next week-end, or, if our political duties forbid, the week-end after, we shall take our well-regulated walks along this road and see perhaps one or two of these delightful red and green insects at their sport in the grass, and think, how pretty they are! And little will we reck of the million corpses

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that even then will be sinking into their last resting place all about us. I do not even mention the butterflies who, being incomparably more beautiful, though probably not more useful, we will actively, even assiduously miss—if we are not more occupied with our more usual decadent diversions."

We were wondering why he was deliberately twisting the knife in the wound of Maryrose's brother's death. She was smiling painfully. And Jimmy, tormented continuously by fear that he would crash and be killed, had the same small wry smile as Maryrose.

"The point I am trying to make, comrades . . ."

"We know what point you are trying to make," said Willi, roughly and angrily. Perhaps it was for moments like these that he was the "father-figure" of the group, as Paul said he was. "Enough," said Willi. "Let's go and get the pigeons."

"It goes without saying, it is self-evident," said Paul, returning to Stalin's favorite opening phrases just so as to hold his own against Willi, "that mine host Boothby's pigeon pie will never get made if we go on in this irresponsible fashion."

We proceeded along the track, among the grasshoppers. About half a mile further on there was a small kopje, or tumbling heap of granite boulders; and beyond it, as if a line had been drawn, the grasshoppers ceased. They were simply not there, they did not exist, they were an extinct species. The butterflies, however, continued everywhere, like white petals dancing.

I think it must have been October or November. Not because of the insects—I'm too ignorant to date the time of the year from them, but because of the quality of the heat that day. It was a sucking, splendid, menacing heat. Late in a rainy season there would have been a champagne tang in the air, a warning of winter. But that day I remember the heat was striking our cheeks, our arms, our legs, even through our clothing. Yes, of course it must have been early in the season, the grass was short, tufts of clear sharp green in white sand. So that week-end was four or five months before the final one, which was just before Paul was killed. And the track we strolled along that morning was where Paul and I ran hand in hand that night months later through a fine seeping mist to fall together in the damp grass. Where? Perhaps near where we sat to shoot pigeons for the pie.

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We left the small kopje behind, and now a big one rose ahead. The hollow between the two was the place Mrs. Boothby had said was visited by pigeons. We struck off the track to the foot of the big kopje, in silence. I remember us walking, silent, with the sun stinging our backs. I can *see* us, five small brightly-colored young people, walking in the grassy vlei through reeling white butterflies under a splendid blue sky.

At the foot of the kopje stood a clump of large trees under which we arranged ourselves. Another clump stood about twenty yards away. A pigeon cooed somewhere from the leaves in this second clump. It stopped at the disturbance we made, decided we were harmless and cooed on. It was a soft, somnolent drugging sound, hypnotic, like the sound of cicadas, which—now that we were listening—we realised were shrilling everywhere about us. The noise of cicadas is like having malaria and being full of quinine, an insane incessant shrilling noise that seems to come out the ear-drums. Soon one doesn't hear it, as one ceases to hear the fevered shrilling of quinine in the blood.

"Only one pigeon," said Paul. "Mrs. Boothby has misled us."

He rested his rifle barrel on a rock, sighted the bird, tried without the support of the rock, and just when we thought he would shoot, laid the rifle aside.

We prepared for a lazy interval. The shade was thick, the grass soft and springy and the sun climbing towards midday position. The kopje behind us towered up into the sky, dominating, but not oppressive. The kopjes in this part of the country are deceptive. Often quite high, they scatter and diminish on approach, because they consist of groups or piles of rounded granite boulders; so that standing at the base of a kopje one might very well see clear through a crevice or small ravine to the vlei on the other side, with great, toppling glistening boulders soaring up like a giant's pile of pebbles. This kopje, as we knew, because we had explored it, was full of the earthworks and barricades built by the Mashona seventy, eighty years before as a defence against the raiding Matabele. It was also full of magnificent Bushmen paintings. At least, they had been magnificent until they had been defaced by guests from the hotel who had amused themselves throwing stones at them.

"Imagine," said Paul. "Here we are, a group of Mashona, be-

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seiged. The Matabele approach, in all their horrid finery. We are outnumbered. Besides, we are not, so I am told? a warlike folk, only simple people dedicated to the arts of peace, and the Matabele always win. We know, we men, that we will die a painful death in a few moments. You lucky women, however, Anna and Maryrose, will merely be dragged off by new masters in the superior tribe of the altogether more warlike and virile Matabele."

"They would kill themselves first," said Jimmy. "Wouldn't you, Anna? Wouldn't you, Maryrose?"

"Of course," said Maryrose, good-humored.

"Of course," I said.

The pigeon cooed on. It was visible, a small, shapely bird, dark against the sky. Paul took up the rifle, aimed and shot. The bird fell, turning over and over with loose wings, and hit earth with a thud we could hear from where we sat. "We need a dog," said Paul. He expected Jimmy to leap up and fetch it. Although we could see Jimmy struggling with himself, he in fact got up, walked across to the sister clump of trees, retrieved the now graceless corpse, flung it at Paul's feet, and sat down again. The small walk in the sun had flushed him, and caused great patches to appear on his shirt. He pulled it off. His torso, naked, was pale, fattish, almost childish. "That's better," he said, defiantly, knowing we were looking at him, and probably critically.

The trees were now silent. "One pigeon," said Paul. "A toothsome mouthful for our host."

From trees far away came the sound of pigeons cooing, a murmuring gentle sound. "Patience," said Paul. He rested his rifle again and smoked.

Meanwhile, Willi was reading. Maryrose lay on her back, her soft gold head on a tuft of grass, her eyes closed. Jimmy had found a new amusement. Between isolated tufts of grass was a clear trickle of sand where water had coursed, probably last night in the storm. It was a miniature riverbed, about two feet wide, already bone dry from the morning's sun. And on the white sand were a dozen round shallow depressions, but irregularly spaced and of different sizes. Jimmy had a fine strong grass-stem, and, lying on his stomach, was wriggling the stem around the bottom of one of the larger depressions.

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The fine sand fell continuously in avalanches, and in a moment the exquisitely regular pit was ruined.

"You clumsy idiot," said Paul. He sounded, as always in these moments with Jimmy, pained and irritated. He really could not understand how anybody could be so awkward. He grabbed the stem from Jimmy, poked it delicately at the bottom of another sand-pit, and in a second had fished out the insect which made it—a tiny ant-eater, but a big specimen of its kind, about the size of a large match head. This insect, toppling off Paul's grass stem onto a fresh patch of white sand, instantly jerked itself into frantic motion, and in a moment had vanished beneath the sand which heaved and sifted over it.

"There," said Paul roughly to Jimmy, handing back his stem. Paul looked embarrassed at his own crossness; Jimmy, silent and rather pale, said nothing. He took the stem and watched the heaving of the minute patch of sand.

Meanwhile we had been too absorbed to notice that two new pigeons had arrived in the trees opposite. They now began to coo, apparently without any intention of co-ordination, for the two streams of soft sound continued, sometimes together, sometimes not.

"They are very pretty," said Maryrose, protesting, her eyes still shut.

"Nevertheless, like your butterflies, they are doomed." And Paul raised his rifle and shot. A bird fell off a branch, this time like a stone. The other bird, startled, looked around, its sharp head turning this way and that, an eye cocked up sky-wards for a possible hawk that had swooped and taken off its comrade, then cocked earth-wards where it apparently failed to identify the bloody object lying in the grass. For after a moment of intense waiting silence, during which the bolt of the rifle snapped, it began again to coo. And immediately Paul raised his gun and shot and it, too, fell straight to the ground. And now none of us looked at Jimmy, who had not glanced up from his observation of his insect. There was already a shallow, beautifully regular pit in the sand, at the bottom of which the invisible insect worked in tiny heaves. Apparently Jimmy had not noticed the shooting of the two pigeons. And Paul did not look at him. He merely waited, whistling very softly, frowning. And in a moment, without looking at us or at Paul, Jimmy began to flush, and then he

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clambered up, walked across to the trees, and came back with the two corpses.

"We don't need a dog after all," remarked Paul. It was said before Jimmy was half-way back across the grass, yet he heard it. I should imagine that Paul had not intended him to hear, yet did not particularly care that he had. Jimmy sat down again, and we could see the very white thick flesh of his shoulders had begun to flush scarlet from the two short journeys in the sun across the bright grass. Jimmy went back to watching his insect.

There was again an intense silence. No doves could be heard cooing anywhere. Three bleeding bodies lay tumbled in the sun by a small jutting rock. The grey rough granite was patched and jewelled with lichens, rust and green and purple; and on the grass lay thick glistening drops of scarlet.

There was a smell of blood.

"Those birds will go bad," remarked Willi, who had read steadily during all this.

"They are better slightly high," said Paul.

I could see Paul's eyes hover towards Jimmy, and see Jimmy struggling with himself again, so I quickly got up and threw the limp wing-dragging corpses into the shade.

By now there was a prickling tension between us all, and Paul said: "I want a drink."

"It's an hour before the pub opens," said Maryrose.

"Well, I can only hope that the requisite number of victims will soon offer themselves, because at the stroke of opening time I shall be off. I shall leave the slaughter to someone else."

"None of us can shoot as well as you," said Maryrose.

"As you know perfectly well," said Jimmy, suddenly spiteful.

He was observing the rivulet of sand. It was now hard to tell which ant pit was the new one. Jimmy was staring at a largish pit, at the bottom of which was a minute hump—the body of the waiting monster; and a tiny black fragment of twig—the jaws of the monster. "All we need now is some ants," said Jimmy. "And some pigeons," said Paul. And, replying to Jimmy's criticism, he added: "Can I help my natural talents? The Lord gives. The Lord takes. In my case, he has given."

"Unfairly," I said. Paul gave me his charming wry appreciative

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smile. I smiled back. Without raising his eyes from his book, Willi cleared his throat. It was a comic sound, like bad theatre, and both I and Paul burst out into one of the wild helpless fits of laughing that often took members of the group, singly, in couples, or collectively. We laughed and laughed, and Willi sat reading. But I remember now the hunched enduring set of his shoulders, and the tight painful set of his lips. I did not choose to notice it at the time.

Suddenly there was a wild shrill silken cleaving of wings and a pigeon settled fast on a branch almost above our heads. It lifted its wings to leave again at the sight of us, folded them, turned round on its branch several times, with its head cocked sideways looking down at us. Its black bright open eyes were like the round eyes of the mating insects on the track. We could see the delicate pink of its claws gripping the twig, and the sheen of sun on its wings. Paul lifted the rifle—it was almost perpendicular—shot, and the bird fell among us. Blood spattered over Jimmy's forearm. He went pale again, wiped it off, but said nothing.

"This is getting disgusting," said Willi.

"It has been from the start," said Paul composedly.

He leaned over, picked the bird off the grass and examined it. It was still alive. It hung limp, but its black eyes watched us steadily. A film rolled up over them, then with a small perceptible shake of determination it pushed death away and struggled for a moment in Paul's hands. "What shall I do?" Paul said, suddenly shrill; then, instantly recovering himself with a joke: "Do you expect me to kill the thing in cold blood?"

"Yes," said Jimmy, facing Paul and challenging him. The clumsy blood was in his cheeks again, mottling and blotching them, but he stared Paul out.

"Very well," said Paul, contemptuous, tight-lipped. He held the pigeon tenderly, having no idea how to kill it. And Jimmy waited for Paul to prove himself. Meanwhile the bird sank in a glossy welter of feathers between Paul's hands, its head sinking on its neck, trembling upright again, sinking sideways, as the pretty eyes filmed over and it struggled again and again to defeat death.

Then, saving Paul the ordeal, it was suddenly dead, and Paul flung it onto the heap of corpses.

"You are always so damned lucky about everything," said

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Jimmy, in a trembling, angry voice. His full carved mouth, the lips he referred to with pride as "decadent" visibly shook.

"Yes, I know," said Paul. "I know it. The Gods favor me. Because I'll admit to you, dear Jimmy, that I could not have brought myself to wring this pigeon's neck."

Jimmy turned away, suffering, to his observation of the ant-eaters' pits. While his attention had been with Paul, a very tiny ant, as light as a bit of fluff, had fallen over the edge of a pit and was at this moment bent double in the jaws of the monster. This drama of death was on such a small scale that the pit, the ant-eater and the ant could have been accommodated comfortably on a small finger-nail—Maryrose's pink little finger-nail for instance.

The tiny ant vanished under a film of white sand, and in a moment the jaws appeared, clean and ready for further use.

Paul ejected the case from his rifle and inserted a bullet with a sharp snap of the bolt. "We have two more to get before we satisfy Ma Boothby's minimum needs," he remarked. But the trees were empty, standing full and silent in the hot sun, all their green boughs light and graceful, very slightly moving. The butterflies were now noticeably fewer; a few dozen only danced on in the sizzling heat. The heat-waves rose like oil off the grass, the sand patches, and were strong and think over the rocks that protruded from the grass.

"Nothing," said Paul. "Nothing happens. What tedium."

Time passed. We smoked. We waited. Maryrose lay flat, eyes closed, delectable as honey. Willi read, doggedly improving himself. He was reading *Stalin on the Colonial Question.*

"Here's another ant," said Jimmy excited. A larger ant, almost the size of the ant-eater, was hurrying in irregular dashes this way and that between grass stems. It moved in the irregular apparently spasmodic way that a hunting dog does when scenting. It fell straight over the edge of the pit, and now we were in time to see the brown shining jaws reach up and snap the ant across the middle, almost breaking it in two. A struggle. White drifts of sand down the sides of the pit. Under the sand they fought. Then stillness.

"There is something about this country," said Paul, "that will have marked me for life. When you think of the sheltered upbringing nice boys like Jimmy and I have had—our nice homes and public

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school and Oxford, can we be other than grateful for this education into the realities of nature red in beak and claw?"

"I'm not grateful," said Jimmy. "I hate this country."

"I adore it. I owe it everything. Never again will I be able to mouth the liberal and high-minded platitudes of my democratic education. I know better now."

Jimmy said: "I may know better, but I shall continue to mouth high-minded platitudes. The very moment I get back to England. It can't be too soon for me. Our education has prepared us above all for the long littleness of life. What else has it prepared us for? Speaking for myself, I can't wait for the long littleness to begin. When I get back—if I ever do get back that is I shall . . ."

"Hallo," exclaimed Paul, "here comes another bird. No it doesn't." A pigeon cleaved towards us, saw us, and swerved off and away in mid-air, nearly settled on the other clump of trees, changed its mind and sped into the distance. A group of farm laborers were passing on the track a couple of hundred yards off. We watched them, in silence. They had been talking and laughing until they saw us, but now they, too, were silent, and went past with averted faces, as if in this way they might avert any possible evil that might come from us, the white people.

Paul said softly: "My God, my God, my God." Then his tone changed, and he said jauntily: "Looking at it objectively, with as little reference as we can manage to Comrade Willi and his ilk—Comrade Willi, I'm inviting you to consider something objectively." Willi laid down his book, prepared to show irony. "This country is larger than Spain. It contains one and a half million blacks, if one may mention them at all, and one hundred thousand whites. That, in itself, is a thought which demands two minutes silence. And what do we see? One might imagine—one would have every excuse for imagining, despite what you say, Comrade Willi, that this insignificant handful of sand on the beaches of time—not bad, that image? —unoriginal, but always apt—this million-and-a-little-over-a-half people exist in this pretty piece of God's earth solely in order to make each other miserable . . ." Here Willi picked up his book again and applied his attention to it. "Comrade Willi, let your eyes follow the print but let the ears of your soul listen. For the *facts* are—the *facts*—that there's enough food here for everyone?—enough materials

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for houses for everyone?—enough talent though admittedly so well hidden under bushels at the moment that nothing but the most generous eye could perceive it—enough talent, I say, to create light where now darkness exists."

"From which you deduce?" said Willi.

"I deduce nothing. I am being struck by a new . . . it's a blinding light, nothing less . . ."

"But what you say is the truth about the whole world, not just this country," said Maryrose.

"Magnificent Maryrose! Yes. My eyes are being opened to—Comrade Willi, would you not say that there is some principle at work not yet admitted to your philosophy? Some principle of destruction?"

Willi said, in exactly the tune we had all expected: "There is no need to look any further than the philosophy of the class struggle," and as if he'd pressed a button, Jimmy, Paul and I burst out into one of the fits of irrepressible laughter that Willi never joined.

"I'm delighted to see," he remarked, grim-mouthed, "that good socialists—at least two of you call yourselves socialists, should find that so very humorous."

"I don't find it humorous," said Maryrose.

"You never find anything humorous," said Paul. "Do you know that you never laugh, Maryrose? Never? Whereas I, whose view of life can only be described as morbid, and increasingly morbid with every passing minute, laugh continuously? How would you account for that?"

"I have no view of life," said Maryrose, lying flat, looking like a neat soft little doll in her bright bibbed trousers and shirt. "Anyway," she added, "you weren't laughing. I listen to you a lot—" (she said this as if she were not one of us, but an outsider) "—and I've noticed that you laugh most when you're saying something terrible. Well, I don't call that laughing."

"When you were with your brother, did you laugh, Maryrose? And when you were with your lucky swain in the Cape?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because we were happy," said Maryrose simply.

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"Good God," said Paul in awe. "I couldn't say that. Jimmy, have you ever laughed because you were happy?"

"I've never been happy," said Jimmy.

"You, Anna?"

"Nor me."

"Willi?"

"Certainly," said Willi, stubborn, defending socialism, the happy philosophy.

"Maryrose," said Paul, "you were telling the truth. I don't believe Willi but I believe you. You are very enviable, Maryrose, in spite of everything. Do you know that?"

"Yes," said Maryrose. "Yes, I think I'm luckier than any of you. I don't see anything wrong with being happy. What's wrong with it?"

Silence. We looked at each other. Then Paul solemnly bowed towards Maryrose: "As usual," he said humbly, "We have nothing to say in reply."

Maryrose closed her eyes again. A pigeon alighted fast on a tree in the opposite clump. Paul shot and missed. "A failure," he exclaimed, mock tragic. The bird stayed where it was, surprised, looking about it, watching a leaf dislodged by Paul's bullet float down to the earth. Paul ejected his empty case, refilled at leisure, aimed, shot. The bird fell. Jimmy obstinately did not move. He did not move. And Paul, before the battle of wills could end in defeat for himself, gained victory by rising and remarking: "I shall be my own retriever." And he strolled off to fetch the pigeon; and we all saw that Jimmy had to fight with himself to prevent his limbs from jumping him up and, over the grass after Paul who came back with the dead bird yawning, flinging it with the other dead birds.

"There's such a smell of blood I shall be sick," said Maryrose.

"Patience," said Paul. "Our quota is nearly reached."

"Six will be enough," said Jimmy. "Because none of us will eat this pie. Mrs. Boothby can have the lot."

"I shall certainly eat of it," said Paul. "And so will you. Do you really imagine that when that toothsome pie, filled with gravy and brown savory meat is set before you, that you will remember the tender songs of these birds so brutally cut short by the crack of doom?"

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"Yes," said Maryrose.

"Yes," I said.

"Willi?" asked Paul, making an issue of it.

"Probably not," said Willi, reading.

"Women are tender," said Paul. "They will watch us eat, toying the while with Mrs. Boothby's good roast beef, making delicate little mouths of distaste, loving us all the more for our brutality."

"Like the Mashona women and the Matabele," said Jimmy.

"I like to think of those days," said Paul, settling down with his rifle at the ready, watching the trees. "So simple. Simple people killing each other for good reasons, lands, women, food. Not like us. Not like us at all. As for us—do you know what is going to happen? I will tell you. As a result of the work of fine comrades like Willi, ever-ready to devote themselves to others, or people like me, concerned only with profits, I predict that in fifty years all this fine empty country we see stretching before us filled only with butterflies and grasshoppers will be covered by semi-detached houses filled by well-clothed black workers."

"And what is the matter with that?" enquired Willi.

"It is progress," said Paul.

"Yes it is," said Willi.

"Why should they be semi-detatched houses?" enquired Jimmy, very seriously. He had moments of being serious about the socialist future. "Under a socialist government there'll be beautiful houses in their own gardens or big flats."

"My dear Jimmy!" said Paul. "What a pity you are so bored by economics. Socialist or capitalist—in either case, all this fine ground, suitable for development, will be developed at a rate possible for seriously undercapitalised countries—are you listening, Comrade Willi?"

"I am listening."

"And because a government faced with the necessity of housing a lot of un-housed people fast, whether socialist or capitalist, will choose the cheapest available houses, the best being the enemy of the better, this fair scene will be one of factories smoking into the fair blue sky, and masses of cheap identical housing. Am I right, Comrade Willi?"

"You are right."

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"Well then?"

"It's not the point."

"It's my point. That is why I dwell on the simple savagery of the Matabele and the Mashona. The other is simply too hideous to contemplate. It is the reality for our time, socialist or capitalist—well, Comrade Willi?"

Willi hesitated, then said: "There will be certain outward similarities but . . ." He was interrupted by Paul and myself, then Jimmy, in a fit of laughter.

Maryrose said to Willi: "They're not laughing at what you say, but because you always say what they expect."

"I am aware of that," said Willi.

"No," said Paul, "you are wrong Maryrose. I'm also laughing at what he's saying. Because I'm horribly afraid it's not true. God forbid, I should be dogmatic about it, but I'm afraid that—as for myself, from time to time I shall fly out from England to inspect my overseas investments and peradventure I shall fly over this area, and I shall look down on smoking factories and housing estates and I shall remember these pleasant, peaceful pastoral days and . . ." A pigeon landed on the trees opposite. Another and another. Paul shot. A bird fell. He shot, the second fell. The third burst out of a bunch of leaves skywards as if it had been shot from a catapult. Jimmy got up, walked over, brought back two bloodied birds, flung them down with the others and said: "Seven. For God's sake, isn't it enough?"

"Yes," said Paul, laying aside his rifle. "And now let's make tracks fast for the pub. We shall just have time to wash the blood off before it opens."

"Look," said Jimmy. A small beetle about twice the size of the largest ant-eater, was approaching through the towering grass stems.

"No good," said Paul, "that is not a natural victim."

"Maybe not," said Jimmy. He twitched the beetle into the largest pit. There was a convulsion. The glossy brown jaws snapped on the beetle, the beetle jumped up, dragging the ant-eater half-way up the sides of the pit. The pit collapsed in a wave of white sand, and for a couple of inches all around the suffocating silent battle, the sand heaved and eddied.

"If we had ears that could hear," said Paul, "the air would be

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full of screams, groans, grunts and gasps. But as it is, there reigns over the sunbathed veld the silence of peace."

A cleaving of wings. A bird alighted.

"No don't," said Maryrose in pain, opening her eyes and raising herself on her elbow. But it was too late. Paul had shot; the bird fell. Before it had even hit the ground another bird had touched down, swinging lightly on a twig at the very end of a branch. Paul shot; the bird fell, this time with a cry and a fluttering of helpless wings. Paul got up, raced across the grass, picked up the dead bird and the wounded one. We saw him give the wounded struggling bird a quick determined tight-mouthed look, and wring its neck.

He came back, flung down the two corpses and said: "Nine. And that's all." He looked white and sick, and yet in spite of it, managed to give Jimmy a triumphant amused smile.

"Let's go," said Willi, shutting his book.

"Wait," said Jimmy. The sand was now unmoving. He dug into it with a fine stem and dragged out, first the body of the tiny beetle, and then the body of the ant-eater. Now we saw the jaws of the ant-eater were embedded in the body of the beetle. The corpse of the ant-eater was headless.

"The moral is," said Paul, "that none but natural enemies should engage."

"But who should decide which are natural enemies and which are not?" said Jimmy.

"Not you," said Paul. "Look how you've upset the balance of nature. There is one ant-eater the less. And probably hundreds of ants that should have filled its maw will now live. And there is a dead beetle, slaughtered to no purpose."

Jimmy stepped carefully over the shining round-pitted river of sand, so as not to disturb the remaining insects lying in wait at the bottom of their sand-traps. He dragged on his shirt over his sweaty reddened flesh. Maryrose got up in the way she had—obedient, patient, long-suffering, as if she had no will of her own. We all stood on the edge of the patch of shade, reluctant to plunge into the now white-hot midday, made dizzy and giddy by the few remaining butterflies who reeled drunk in the heat. And as we stood there, the clump of trees we had lain under sang into life. The cicadas which inhabited this grove, patiently silent these two hours waiting for

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us to go, burst one after another into shrill sound. And in the sister clump of trees, unnoticed by us, had arrived two pigeons who sat there cooing. Paul contemplated them, his rifle swinging. "No," said Maryrose, "Please don't."

"Why not?"

"Please Paul."

The heap of nine dead pigeons, tied together by their pink feet, dangled from Paul's free hand, dripping blood.

"It is a terrible sacrifice," said Paul gravely, "but for you, Maryrose I will refrain."

She smiled at him, not in gratitude, but in the cool reproachful way she always used for him. And he smiled back, his delightful, brown, blue-eyed face all open for her inspection. They walked off together in front, the dead birds trailing their wings over jade-colored clumps of grass.

The three of us followed.

"What a pity," remarked Jimmy, "that Maryrose disapproves so much of Paul. Because there is no doubt they are what are known as a perfectly-matched couple." He had tried the light ironic tone, and almost succeeded. Almost, not quite; his jealousy of Paul grated in his voice.

We looked: they were, those two, a perfect couple, both so light and graceful, the sun burnishing their bright hair, shining on their brown skins. And yet Maryrose strolled on without looking at Paul who gave her his whimsically appealing blue glances all in vain.

It was too hot to talk on the way back. Passing the small kopje on whose granite chunks the sun was beating, waves of dizzying heat struck at us so that we hurried past it. Everything was empty and silent, only the cicadas and a distant pigeon sang. And past the kopje we slowed and looked for the grasshoppers, and saw that the bright clamped couples had almost disappeared. A few remained, one above another, like painted clothes-pegs with painted round black eyes. A few. And the butterflies were almost gone. One or two floated by, tired, over the sun-beaten grass.

Our heads ached with the heat. We were slightly sick with the smell of blood.

At the hotel we separated with hardly a word.

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John Strachey

COMMUNIST INTENTIONS

It is a military maxim that in framing a country's defence policy, the capabilities alone, never the intentions, of other nations must be taken into account. But this is one of those maxims which, however dutifully they are preached in the Staff Colleges, can never be adhered to in the Cabinet rooms.

Both we in Britain and the Western Alliance as a whole evidently worry about Russian intentions. If we did not, we should be unconcerned with Russian capabilities.

There exists a school of thought in British public life which frequently expresses the belief that all these fears of Russian intentions are quite ill-founded. Adherents of this school of thought might even go so far as to say that if there actually was any danger of Russia attempting to attack us then indeed the whole chain of consequences which we have considered might follow. But, they would add, there is no such danger. Russia, they conclude, is a completely pacific state, armed only in self defence and as a precaution against the armaments of her potential opponents: we could scrap our own armaments without fear or hesitation, secure in the knowledge that Russia would take no advantage of our impotence.

This view of Russian intentions is at the one pole of political opinion. At the other pole there are those who suppose that Russia is a state dedicated to the military conquest of the world for communism: a crusading state, much more aggressive even, than most of the nation-states of history, because driven by "a sacred mission" to impose her way of life upon the world wherever and however she can; a state restrained by fear of the military strength of the Western alliance alone. In the face of such disagreement, it is evidently indispensable to arrive at some appreciation, or estimate, of Russian

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intentions; for no policy for the prevention of nuclear war can leave them out of account. Moreover, Russia is now only one (though still much the stronger) of the communist powers. We must consider also Chinese intentions. (Later on we must attempt a similar estimate of American intentions, of the intentions of America's allies, and, broadening out from that, of the intentions of the other considerable nation-states of the world.)

It will be noted that neither of the above schools of political thought regard Russia as a normal nation-state. One regards her as a much misunderstood angel of peace, the other as the devil incarnate. In one sense our inquiry may then be stated in terms of the question: to what extent, if at all, can present-day Russia be treated as a nation-state of the familiar type? Let us first recall that the Soviet Government, whatever it may now have become, was not established as the government of a nation-state of any kind. On the contrary the establishment of The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was intended to put an end to the existence of Russia as a nation-state. What was to be put in her place was a union of self-governing socialist republics, to which any and every future socialist society might be expected to adhere, irrespective of whether or not the capitalist or feudal nation-states they had succeeded had formed a part of the Russian Empire. formed a part of the Russian Empire.

Lenin, Trotsky and the other founding-fathers of Soviet Russia were deeply in earnest in this conception. For good and ill they really were internationalists. It is true that Lenin himself, in distinction from many of his senior colleagues such as Trotsky and Stalin, was a deeply rooted Great Russian. (See his article on "The National Pride of the Great Russians.") But even Lenin was unquestionably a communist long before he was a Russian. This was not because he denied or ignored the existence of nationalism, but because, as a Marxist, he believed that, for the working class, national conflicts were overshadowed by class conflicts. Trotsky wrote of him (*Pravda,* April 23rd, 1920): "Lenin's internationalism is by no means a form of reconciliation of nationalism and internationalism in words, but a form of international revolutionary action. The territory of the earth inhabited by so called civilized man is looked upon as a coherent field of combat on which the separate peoples and classes wage

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gigantic warfare against each other. No single question of importance can be forced into a national frame."

Unquestionably this was the original vision of Marx. It is inscribed in the Communist Manifesto itself.

> . . . modern industrial labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America, as in Germany, has stripped him ('the worker') of every trace of national character . . . The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got . . . National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing . . . The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still further . . .

Time has dealt more cruelly, perhaps, with this theme of militant internationalism, which runs through the whole original body of communist theory, than with any other. One hundred and fifteen years have passed and "the worker" has on the whole more "national character" than ever. Far from having no fatherland, it would be truer to say that he has come to feel that to have a nationally independent fatherland is a prerequisite for having anything else. Nevertheless communists have never abandoned their original vision of a world unity founded upon the demand that the workers of the world should unite. Thus Lenin, and still more Trotsky, were deeply imbued with international faith, founded the Soviet Union in its light, and would have been profoundly shocked at the idea that their foundation could develop into a nation-state. To what extent has the Soviet Union, nevertheless, done just this? And, if so, how and why has such a transformation taken place?

From time to time hard-working American professors rediscover the above-described internationalist basis of communist theory, and are profoundly shocked by their discovery. They are then apt to proclaim that they have unearthed a dastardly conspiracy to conquer the world. This, for example, is the attitude of mind exhibited by Professor Elliot R. Goodman in his recent book *The Soviet Design for a World State* (Oxford University Press, 1960). The Professor's erudition seems only matched by his lack of insight into the nature of the contemporary world situation. He produces a hundred quotations to demonstrate what anyone who has ever read Marx or Lenin knows already, namely that communism is an international creed, which regards the nation-state as something to be transcended. So far as that is concerned we shall be inclined to reply "so what?"

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Must not any thoughtful student of the post nuclear world do the same?

The tone of hectic conspiracy-hunting which pervades not only Professor Goodman's work, but also his whole school of thought, is a great pity. For it may cause many people to refuse to reflect upon several by no means new but still important considerations which his school of thought advances. In the first place Professor Goodman, in particular, emphasizes and documents the undeniable fact that original communist doctrine looked forward not only to the dissolution of all existing nations but to the re-integration of all peoples into a World Federation of Socialist Republics of which the Soviet Union was regarded as the nucleus.

Second, Professor Goodman by no means disregards the extent to which the Soviet Union over the past forty years has appeared to depart from its internationalist principles. He deals at length with the Stalinist concept of building socialism in one country; with the apparently ruthless sacrifice of the interests of the extra-Russian communist parties to Russian national interest; and with the subjection of the other nations of the Tsarist Empire to the dominance of the Great Russians. But all these undeniable events are, he considers, evidence of the extent to which the internationalist ideal has been distorted, rather than of its abandonment. He is convinced that the communists of the 1960's are as firmly determined as were the communists of 1917 to build a world state upon the basis of the workers' class solidarity. Only now, he writes, theirs has become a determination to build a "Russified" world state.

There is force in this contention. To the extent to which the old universalist ideal is preserved at all, it has undoubtedly been heavily Russified. But Professor Goodman does not seem to allow sufficiently for the extent to which this very development has made the original communist internationalism unacceptable and inapplicable outside Russia. This is shown by his inability adequately to account for the fact that the nations which became communist after 1945 have not become members of the Soviet Union, but have either remained "satellites" or become genuinely independent. He is convinced that this is a mere temporary status on the way to their full incorporation. But this conviction does not enable him to account for the fact that, on the whole, the countries of Eastern Europe have in most cases

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achieved a little more, rather than less, national independence of recent years. Above all how does it account for the two cardinal facts that Yugoslavia has become undeniably independent, and that no one even suggests the incorporation of China in the Soviet Union?

Professor Goodman and his school fail to differentiate between the internationalism and universalism of communist *intentions* and the way in which the world is in fact developing. Blinded by the intensity of their hatred and fear of communism they miss the ever-growing divergence between what is actually happening in the world and what the communist leaders would still, no doubt, like to happen. And this is again a pity for it is the key to an explanation of the paradox that the communists, though complete internationalists in theory, in practice oppose any and every move towards the establishment of even the most embryonic form of world authority and appear upon the world stage as unyielding champions of national sovereignty. The explanation is that communists believe exclusively in a post-revolutionary internationalism. Only socialist societies, which have finally overcome all capitalist resistance within themselves, can, they are convinced, come together in a world federation (and ultimately in a unitary world society). They lay it down that it is as impossible as it would be undesirable for capitalist nation-states to do any such thing.

There is little doubt that the transition of the Soviet Union into the Russian nation-state, in so far as it has occurred, has taken place indirectly and unconsciously. What happened was that as the years went by after the revolution, the Russian leaders began to think of the Soviet Union as the unavoidably national incarnation of their essentially international communist ideal. The two events, both entirely unexpected to the original Bolshevik leaders, which caused this paradoxical development were (1) the postponement of the revolution in the rest of the world and (2) the consolidation, nevertheless, of communist rule in, roughly, the territory of the former Russian Empire.

The result has been that the Soviet Union has come to be envisaged by communists, both within and without her borders, as, indeed, a nation-state, but as a nation-state of a special and exceptional character. The Soviet Union had had to become, it was felt, a nation-state in spite of herself. But if she had been forced into this

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role she must never forget that she was a nation-state-with-a-mission. Her mission was to act as the national refuge, bastion and base for the quintessentially internationalist communist movement.

As a matter of fact, this kind of "nation-state-with-a-mission" is not a new phenomenon in history. On several occasions particular nation-states have come to incarnate essentially international ideals and causes. We may think of two examples, in one of which the ideal so incarnated was conservative, in the other revolutionary. The Spain of Philip II incarnated, as refuge, bastion, and base, Roman Catholicism both as faith and cause. His Spain was the base of the Counter-Reformation in its desperate international struggle with Protestantism. And Philip probably felt himself a Catholic even before he was a Spaniard. For he sometimes appeared to sacrifice Spanish national interests to the interests of the international Catholic Church, if and when these interests conflicted. A second example is afforded by Republican, and to a decreasing extent even Imperial, France between 1789 and 1814. The republican leaders, and even Napoleon for some time, felt themselves to be the leaders of the anti-feudal forces of the world, engaged in a struggle with the old order, as well as, and in some cases even more than, the leaders of France.

Hence there is nothing particularly exceptional in the mixture of passionate nationalism and (at least initially) passionate internationalism which has characterized the Soviet Government. Experience suggests that nation-states-with-a-mission are apt to have two characteristics. They are even more self-assertive and aggressive than other nation-states. And they are apt to commit serious mistakes, owing to the mixture of motives by which they are actuated. National interest, like many other compelling interests, is most effectively pursued single-mindedly. To this extent it is more difficult for nation-states-with-a-mission to hold their own, in the long run, than the more ordinary variety of the species. On the other hand they have obvious short-run advantages, such as increased fanaticism and, often, groups of adherents, either secret or open, within their rival states.

Be that as it may, a nation-state-with-a-mission is unquestionably what Soviet Russia has in fact been, during most of the forty-odd years of her existence. She has been neither, that is to say, what her founders intended her to be, namely the mere nucleus of a

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new, world-wide, international, indeed anti-national, communist society, nor on the other hand has she been a mere nation-state like another without any particular ideological and international ties, duties, or responsibilities. For I believe that even when she has most ruthlessly sacrificed the apparent and immediate interests of communist parties in the rest of the world, as she so often has, she has done so in the fairly sincere belief that, by preserving herself at all costs, she was in the long run furthering the interests of communism all over the world.

The next question is, to what extent is the Russia of the 1960's still a nation-state of this special character? The proceedings of the meeting of the eighty-one communist parties in the autumn of 1960 and of the Twenty-second Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1961 should throw light on this question. To a certain extent they do. They make it perfectly clear that there is now a sharp difference of opinion between the Russian and the Chinese communist leaders upon precisely this issue of the extent to which communist nations should be nation-states-with-a-mission. No one can any longer doubt that the Chinese believe that the mission to spread communism through the world should be pursued much more militantly than do the Russians. But of course the Russian communist leaders still believe in that mission to a certain extent. The question is, to what extent? And here the interpretations which can be put, and which have been put, on Mr. Khruschev's pronouncements at these conferences, of those of other Russian spokesmen, of the statement of the eighty-one parties in 1960 and the new program of the C.P.S.U. in 1961 differ widely. How widely may be judged by the following contrast. Professor Merle Fainsod (the eminent American sociologist) writing in a special supplement of *Problems of Communism* (published by the Information Agency of the U.S. Government) speaks of "the ambiguous formula of peaceful co-existence which Khruschev has chosen as his springboard to world power . . ." On the other hand the Albanian leaders, speaking it may be surmised on behalf of their Chinese patrons, characterize the same pronouncements as "bourgeois pacifism" (quoted in *The Guardian* January 11th, 1962.) Again according to Satyukov speaking at the Twenty-Second Congress, Molotov in his letter to the Central Committee protesting the new draft pro-

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gram also asserted that it contained "pacifism and even revisionism."

Evidently you can pay your money and take your choice: you can regard the present Russian doctrine of the possibility of co-existence as "a springboard to world power" or as a betrayal of the whole program of international communism. Both views seem extravagant. For my part I do not believe that the new evidence which we now have has done more than confirm the commonplace conclusion that Russia is still a nation-state-with-a-mission, but that on the other hand she now has a considerably lessened sense of that mission. Only those with very special causes to plead will deny that Russia still feels a mission to assist the spread of communism through the world, or, on the other hand, that she feels this mission less compulsively, and even less ardently, than once she did.

All this may be incontrovertible, but it may also be not very helpful for the purpose of estimating Russia's intentions. What matters for that is to form an estimate of *how much* the compulsive character of the Soviet Government's mission to spread communism has cooled and waned. And when we enter this quantitative field we enter a field of speculation indeed. Lenin's revolutionary internationalism envisaged, as Trotsky wrote: "the territory of the earth . . . as a coherent field of combat," on which the class war could and must be fought out to a finish. Mr. Khruschev, as we have seen, sometimes at least envisages the world as a Noah's Ark of refuge into which all sensible peoples will come in order, precisely, to avoid nuclear war to the finish, not of one, but of both, sides. The question is how much of the distance between these two standpoints has the Soviet government in fact traversed? Again, how much is it simply the dread of nuclear war, and how much a general maturing and civilizing process, which has made the Soviet Government travel, in the direction at any rate, of the acceptance of the possibility of co-existence? Both factors have, in my view, been at work. But the effect of a realization of the consequences of nuclear war should not be underestimated. It may well be that Lenin himself in the nuclear age would have endorsed Khruschev's Noah's Ark speech. But would Lenin have endorsed it at its face value, or would he have merely regarded it as a shrewd tactical move? In other words to what extent does the Soviet government now sincerely agree that the world-wide struggle, which in-

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contestably exists, both can, and must, be conducted without resort to all out war?

It can hardly be contested that the main strand in Lenin's thinking was to the effect that a further bout of wars, in part at least between the Soviet Union and some or all of the remaining capitalist states, was inevitable. He would have smiled his shrewd smile at any comrade who thought otherwise.* Moreover his relentless antagonism would have been vented upon anyone who tried to deflect Russian policy from the necessity of preparing for such conflicts. Lenin was representative of the communist thought of his day in this respect. There is no doubt about what was the real attitude of the Soviet Government to the matter right up to 1941. It can be conveniently summed up in two antithetical propositions. First, war between the Soviet Union and at least some parts of the rest of the world was inevitable. But, second, this war must be postponed for as long as possible and by every conceivable means, including if necessary great caution and restraint, and even, if unavoidable, by serious sacrifices upon the part of the Soviet Government.

The explanation of why the Soviet Government should have gone to such lengths in order to postpone a conflict which they were convinced was inevitable sooner or later is simple. They were sure that Soviet strength was on a rapidly rising curve and that capitalist strength was on a rapidly declining curve. If only the war could be put off long enough it would take place after the curves had intersected. Then Soviet strength would prove the greater and the capitalists would be defeated. It would be foolish to suggest that this Leninist prognosis of world development, and the policy which was built upon it, had proved entirely mistaken. After all, war between Russia and a part of the capitalist world did in fact break out in 1941. The Soviet Government, at least, is no doubt convinced that it was only postponed until the twenty-fourth year after the Revolution by caution and deft maneuvring on their own part. And when war did come, Russia, and her allies, were in fact victorious.

* I am reminded of the anecdote of Lenin's reaction when he was shown a pamphlet by Eden and Cedar Paul, two elderly English pacifists (and translators of the first volume of *Capital*) who were expressing their admiration for the Soviet Union. After reading a few pages on the wholly pacific character of communism, Lenin enquired: "These be very young comrades?"

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In the pre-nuclear age the Leninist prognosis did not, then, prove far wrong in one sense. Nor, it is certain, would Lenin have flinched from the view that it was only by means of world war—and very likely a series of world wars—that the goal of world communism could be reached. He was entirely convinced that until and unless that goal was reached, violence was the inevitable means of social progress. It was not, to be sure, that the revolutionists deliberately *chose* violence. There was no such choice open to them. Every decisive encounter in which the vital interests of social classes were involved had invariably been decided by violence. True, secondary and indecisive advantages might be won by non-violent means and these should not be neglected. But equally, it was cowardice and treachery of the worst sort when the leaders of the workers flinched from violent means when these, as they always would be at the point of crisis, became inevitable. Lenin wrote one of his most forceful passages defining exactly this attitude to violence. He does so mainly in the context of internal, revolutionary violence. But he adopted exactly the same attitude to international violence, which was in the last resort for him always an expression, however indirect, of the conflict of social classes:

> Today there is no revolutionary situation apparent; there are no such conditions as would cause a ferment among the masses or heighten their activities; today you are given an election ballot—take it. Understand how to organize for it, to hit your enemies with it, and not to place men in soft parliamentary berths who cling to their seat in fear of prison. Tomorrow you are deprived of the election ballot, you are given a rifle and a splendid machine gun equipped according to the last word of machine technique—take this weapon of death and destruction, do not listen to the sentimental whiners who are afraid of war. Much has been left in the world that *must* be destroyed by fire and iron for the liberation of the working class. (*Lenin Collected Works.* Vol. XVIII—p. 316.)

Here we have the communist view of the matter expressed with matchless vigor. Nor is there any proof that Lenin would have taken the view that the development of nuclear weapons was, in itself, a reason for revising this basic doctrine as to the nature of human society and its methods of development. The question is, however, not so much whether in the nuclear age Lenin would or would not have modified this orthodox communist attitude to violence in general, and in particular to the question of the inevitability of further general

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war; the question is rather whether the present Soviet leaders have in fact done so. If they have, we may be sure that they have only done so gradually, reluctantly, and, probably, only half consciously. We may be sure that for a long time, even after the second World War, they still adhered to the two Leninist propositions (a) that further general war between Russia and "the Imperialists" was inevitable, and (b) that it should be postponed, by every possible means, for as long as possible.

Let us notice at once, however, that the practical policies of a government that believes that general war is inevitable, but must be postponed by every possible means, will probably be very similar to those of a government which supposes that war may be averted altogether. This is especially true if one of the main hypotheses on which the prognosis of inevitability is based begins to prove more and more doubtful. That hypothesis was that, as the curve of communist strength ascended, the curve of the strength of the rest of the world, hopelessly bedevilled by the "inner contradictions" of capitalism, would equally descend. For it was upon the basis of this hypothesis that the communists concluded that the despairing capitalists would be certain sooner or later to attack, foreseeing that if they delayed too long their position would become hopeless.

In the real development of events over the last quarter century, one part of this prognosis has been fulfilled. Communist strength has grown greatly. But the other part of the prognosis has gone hopelessly astray. The non-communist world is unquestionably in a far healthier and far stronger state than it was in, say, 1932. The advanced, industrialized, capitalisms are thriving instead of sinking into intolerable stagnation. Consequently, as every Marxist ought (but refuses) to accept, their wage earners have largely ceased to be open to revolutionary propaganda. Their empires, which turn out to have been a source of weakness, not of strength, to them, have become "the underdeveloped world," which, with varying but appreciable success, is at least striving to progress. The curve of the strength of the non-communist world, instead of descending to intersect the rising curve of communist strength, is running upwards somewhere roughly parallel to it.

To what extent have the rulers of Russia noticed all this? Of course it would never do for them to acknowledge any of it. We

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cannot expect that. Until very recently they stuck with unshakeable dogmatism to the theory of the ever-increasing misery of the wage earners of the non-communist world, reiterating it more and more passionately as it became more and more preposterously at variance with the facts. That was only to be expected. (As these words are being written, however, signs are at last appearing that the dogma of ever-increasing misery has been shaken. An admission of the existence of the affluent society is implicit in some of Mr. Khruschev's speeches. And an explicit denial that such a thing is impossible is beginning to appear in some of the work of the most knowledgeable Soviet economists.) Nevertheless the new Russian thesis that a further general war is no longer inevitable is still usually based in public precisely upon the view that "the Imperialists" (i.e. non-communists) are getting weaker so quickly that, with careful handling, they may miss their moment, and be induced, in effect, to surrender peacefully. Any other explanation of the idea that further general war is no longer inevitable would be too un-Leninist. It would involve too unorthodox assumptions about the character of the real development in the non-communist world, about the intentions of the rulers of that world, and about the general uncertainty of future social development to be publicly presentable inside the communist world.

But what do Mr. Khruschev and his fellow members of the Praesidium *really* think? They are beginning to go about the world. Do the wage earners of the United States *look* to them as if they were sinking into ever increasing misery? Do the wage earners of Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Scandinavia, Japan, Australia, and now even of much of France and Northern Italy seem to be promising material for revolutionary propaganda? As "the affluent society" (with all its faults and vulgarity and ugliness) spreads itself across the Western world, does it not occur to them, in the privacy of their studies at least, that something queer and unforeseen is happening?

If once the thought that the real development of events in the West is diverging from the Leninist prognosis enters their minds, they will surely find it hard to avoid noting other divergencies. For even with them events have not really followed the Leninist forecast. True, the "Socialist Camp" has grown right enough, in geographical extent as well as in armed power. But it has not grown in the simple, Lenin-

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ist, internationalist form of the adhesion on the part of each new communist state to the Soviet Union. On the contrary with the single exception of the Baltic States (and can he members of the Praesidium persuade even themselves that there was anything voluntary in that?) all the new states of the communist world have become, nominally at least, fully sovereign independent states. True, most of them are effectively dominated by Russian power, including in some cases Russian occupation. But that is a very different thing from voluntary inclusion in the USSR. How different a thing it is became apparent when movements of revolt took place in East Germany and Poland and actual revolt broke out in Hungary.

And then there is the painful spectacle of Yugoslavia. What would Lenin have said to a state which has been through a thoroughgoing Communist revolution, in which "the power of the bourgeoisie has been liquidated" quite as effectively as elsewhere in the communist world, but which, far from federating itself within the Soviet Union, obstinately goes its own way, and often has much worse relations with Russia than with "the Imperialists" themselves.

But far more important than all this is the fact of China. Here is the second great nation—potentially at least another super-power—to go communist. And no one has ever (to my knowledge) even suggested that she should become a member of the Soviet Union. It is taken for granted that she has become a totally independent, communist *nation*. What would Lenin have said to that? Would he have pointed out that a communist *nation,* in that full sense, was a contradiction in terms? That communism was a concept expressly and from the outset designed to transcend nationalism? How could he have denied that the emergence of completely separate and completely sovereign communist nations was an anomaly which gave further disturbing evidence that world development was by no means proceeding according to plan? I daresay that in practice Lenin would have merely closed his eyes to narrower slits and repeated his favorite maxim that "History is more cunning than any of us." But if so that would have been because he was an extremely shrewd man, as well as a devoted Marxist.

It may be possible to guage both the extent and the limits of the change in Russian intentions and attitudes to war by a study of the controversy which developed during 1960 and 1961 between

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the Russian and Chinese Governments and communist parties. That controversy is far too complex and too obscure for it to be possible to give any adequate account of it here. But even its more obvious features reveal the fact that the Chinese government has intentions of a different character to that of the Russian government.

One of the best accounts of this controversy is to be found in a book by Mr. Kardelj, the scholarly Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, entitled *Socialism and War* (Jugoslavija Publishing House). Mr. Kardelj is intent to answer not only Chinese but also Russian charges against Yugoslavia. For the Yugoslavs were in a sense the whipping boys of both sides in this affair. The Chinese would accuse the Russians of being almost as bad deviationists as those abominable heretics the Yugoslavs: the Russians would answer back indignantly pointing out the wide differences between their own attitudes, which they said, were still strictly Leninist, and the, admittedly, inexcusable heresies of the Yugoslavs. So Mr. Kardelj had plenty to answer!

The controversy largely turned in fact, if not in form, precisely upon this issue of whether or not a third world war with "the Imperialists" was or was not inevitable. But the issue was blurred by the fact that the Chinese would never say flat out that it was. On the whole they took up the position that (a) the imperialists would never surrender without a fight; (b) that it was of course indispensable to rid the world of imperialism and (c) that anyhow a third world war wouldn't be so bad after all, for the damage it would do to the socialist countries could be quickly repaired: and then a socialist world could go rapidly ahead in conditions of permanent and assured peace. Mr. Kardelj sums up the Chinese attitude as follows:

> Only incurable petty-bourgeois pacifists could believe that war is not inevitable, say the Chinese critics of Yugoslavia. Only men whose heads are full of illusions or who deliberately aim at putting a good face on imperialism could assert that imperialism will renounce war, and only revisionists who have no faith in the vital strength and mind of man could assert that military technique can influence the course of social development, these same critics continue.

We must allow for the fact that Mr. Kardelj is writing a polemic: I repeat that so far as I know the Chinese have never in public said that a third world war is inevitable. Nevertheless Mr. Kardelj is able to substantiate that the above is not very different from the Chinese

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attitude, especially on the point that there is nothing particularly disastrous about nuclear war, by quotations from the Chinese Press. For example *Red Flag* (Peking, April 19th, 1960) is quoted:

> . . . were the imperialists to insist on imposing such sacrifices on the nations, we are convinced that those sacrifices would soon be redeemed, as the experience of the Russian and the Chinese revolutions has shown. On the ruins of dead imperialism the victorious peoples will soon build up a civilization a thousand times higher in level than the capitalist system, and a future for themselves which would be really glorious.

Moreover we now have a good deal of evidence, of varying degrees of reliability it is true, but which in sum establishes pretty conclusively that the Chinese attitude to war is approximately this. If so, it is approximately what the Russian attitude was a quarter of a century ago. Since then the Russians, but not the Chinese, have appreciated the character of nuclear war. They are aware, for both Mr. Khruschev and General Talensky have told them so, that a third world war, since it would almost certainly be nuclear, would cause damage to their part of the world which, far from being quickly reparable, would be likely to set back human civilization, of whatever sort—bourgeois, proletarian, socialist, imperialist alike—for an indefinite period.

When will the Russians or anyone else succeed in telling the Chinese about all this? Probably the Russians have been endeavoring to do so for some time now. What success they have had in making the Chinese listen—never an easy task—is unknown. But no task could, surely, be more urgent than to educate Chinese ruling opinion on the realities of nuclear war: on what might perhaps be called "the facts of death." For whether they know it or not, the facts of nuclear death now apply just as much to China as to the rest of us. Indeed it might have been supposed that a country possessing neither means of nuclear retaliation nor remotely effective means of stopping the nuclear weapons of its potential opponents would show some signs of a consciousness of the consequences for it of nuclear war.

It is often said that the Chinese leaders do not fear nuclear attack because of the large size of their country and because it contains over six hundred million inhabitants. Even if, they are reported as arguing, a hundred million Chinese were killed, that would still leave five hundred million to carry on. But what, we may inquire,

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makes the Chinese leaders suppose that only a hundred million Chinese would be likely to be killed in a full scale nuclear attack upon China? If they do in fact suppose anything of this sort, they are horribly misinformed. They must be still thinking in terms of fission weapons of the order of magnitude of the bombs which fell upon Japan nearly twenty years ago. For it is true that such weapons as these, of which the main effects were by fire and blast, would be relatively ineffective against a vast peasant population scattered over millions of square miles. But none of this is true of the thermo-nuclear weapons in the megaton range of the 1960's. For one of the main effects of these is, as we have noted, their lethal "fall out" which, though local in the sense that it does not spread throughout the world, covers areas of millions of square miles down wind from the point of explosion. Peasant populations living in insubstantial houses of brick, mud or straw might be appallingly vulnerable to such a fall out.

It is, surely, exceedingly important that the Chinese Communist leaders should come to realize the dreadful facts of the nuclear age. It is important that they should realize all this, not in order that they should be menaced nor attacked (and this they may rely on, for after all they have Russian retaliatory power behind them so long as they maintain their alliance), but in order that a realization of their own fearful vulnerability should restrain them from pressing down upon their neighbors, as they have actually done in the case of India. For the present they seem to both act and speak out of a mood of wholly illusory serenity, which they suppose the size and character of their population to give them. If and when the Chinese leaders come to realize the extreme jeopardy in which they, like all the rest of us, stand today, may they not revise at least this one of their dogmas?

However the Sino-Russian controversy is a much deeper one than a dispute as to the consequences of nuclear war. It involves the whole question of the attitude of communists to war and aggression in general. In this wider field the controversy is largely carried on by means of swopping quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin. In this form of warfare it is not certain that the Chinese would, on the whole, be worsted in the exchanges. Mr. Kardelj is able to produce some fairly effective remarks by Lenin: but an equally erudite Chinese Leninist might be able to show that the main weight of Lenin's thought was on his side. It is not till Mr. Kardelj widens

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the argument, at any rate to the extent of quoting Marx and Engels as well as Lenin, that he is really able to score. But then he does. For he recalls to us that statement of Engels, in his mature and mellow old age, to the effect that he and Marx had always been against "trying to make people happy by force." They had, Engels claims, always opposed "exporting" the Revolution forcibly by means of conquering some neighboring country, the people of which might or might not be ready for it, and imposing socialism on them by military power.

It can hardly be claimed that the young Marx and Engels had in fact always lived up to this eminently wise view. This was not because they would have dissented from it consciously but because they had dogmatically believed that the workers everywhere and always were "really" passionately anxious to revolt and throw off the chains of their oppressors. Thus, in practice, it might be quite legitimate to liberate them with an invading army, if they could not do the job for themselves. It may be surmised that this is the present (1962) standpoint of the Chinese Communists. No doubt they too would say that they do not believe in exporting revolution or "making other peoples happy by force." Nevertheless their view of the world is as one-sided as was that of Marx and Engels in the 1840's and with, on the whole, less justification. They are sure that all peoples everywhere in the non-communist world, are desperately seeking for the opportunity to revolt. Therefore any and every form of armed assistance which can be given them is fully justified. The Chinese make little distinction between movements of colonial revolt, such as those of Angola and Algeria, which not only they, but also the Russians, and for that matter many people in the West (including myself) consider justified, and non-existent movements of revolt which they affect to see in the highly developed non-communist societies. It is this extreme lack of any discriminating and objective appreciation of contemporary social reality which distinguishes the Chinese from the Russian communists in 1962.

Not that the Russian communists are free from distortions of reality, especially when what they suppose to be their own vital interests are concerned. We may be sure that many Russian communists were able to persuade themselves that the Hungarian workers were "really" on the Russian side in 1956. The fact that *phenomenally*

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the workers were fighting upon the other side and had to be trampled under the tank tracks of several Soviet armored divisions was a mere appearance, unconnected with the essence of things. For the word "really" has come to mean its opposite, namely "ideally," in the philosophical, metaphysical or transcendental sense. Such are the uses of philosophy.*

We unphilosophic British can only reflect upon how much better, safer and longer-lived this world might be if only communists, Russians as well as Chinese, would take seriously the words of Engels in his maturity. For Engels at the end of his life had begun to mean them seriously himself. He had noticed that the world was a different sort of place from what it had been in 1848. True, he was still, on the whole, a revolutionary because he correctly foresaw that the European powers were driving or drifting towards internecine war, and might well therefore present the workers with both the necessity and the opportunity of a violent seizure of power. But he had come to see that general war was likely to prove the one remaining revolutionary occasion. Moreover, and in spite of this, Engels was quite clear that it was highly advantageous for the European workers to postpone war indefinitely if possible, for the power to influence society by democratic means was steadily gaining and must, if uninterrupted by war and revolution, become in the end predominant.

In any event one of the main impressions which the Sino-Russian controversy must make upon the Western observer is that it is impossible to deny that the Russians have in fact revised their views on war and aggression. It is fully open to them to point out that they have only done so because the "objective circumstances" of the world situation have dramatically changed. Indeed it is just for their failure to adapt their attitudes to objective changes which stare them in the face that we must blame the Chinese. But revise their attitudes the Russians undoubtedly have. If they had not, there could not be any such thing as the Sino-Russian dispute.

On the other hand the existence of the dispute must continually

* For instance: "Trained by the Communist Party, the armed forces of the USSR live up to their international duty. This was demonstrated by the aid they gave to the working people of Hungary . . ." (Col. G. Federor writing in *Krasnaia Zvezda,* March 22nd, 1957. Quoted in *The Soviet Design for a World State.*)

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remind us that there is now another communist great power, which if by no means as strong as Russia, will no doubt grow in strength, and which retains much of the older and unmodified communist attitudes and intentions to war and aggression. Communist China is not indeed a society built on the model of the original Leninist concept of the abolition of the nation-state and the substitution for it of a federation of Socialist Republics. If she were, she would presumably have become a federal Republic of the Soviet Union. China is, then, a nation-state, and in that respect her very existence flouts the fully internationalist communist vision. But she is obviously very much of a nation-state-with-a-mission. She still takes the spread of communism in at least her part of the world very seriously. No such cooling and tempering process, by means of which Russia has begun at least to approximate to a "run-of-the-mill-nation-state," has taken place in her case. For the Chinese the communist parties of the world are, or at any rate ought to be, a church militant. Thus we must face the fact that Chinese Communist militancy and intransigence will be a destablizing factor in the world situation for some time to come.

China is firmly allied to the Soviet Union and that alliance is not likely to break down while the obvious necessity for it exists. But is not every year bringing further evidence that the Soviet-Chinese alliance is remarkably like other alliances? That the relations of the allies are by no means always harmonious? That both allies sometimes feel irked and provoked by the very necessity which forces them to *be* allies? That the Soviet-Chinese relationship is at least as uneasy, though perhaps also as firm, as the Western alliance? And does not all this amount to a very strong suggestion at least that "the socialist camp" is not and cannot be a monolithic, fully unified, structure, any more than can the rest of the world? The fact is that this almost incredibly hardy social phenomenon, "the nation" (whatever a nation may be) has persisted into the post-revolutionary epoch: that nations do not after all disappear, or even tend to wither away, after they have organized their economies on the communist pattern.

But if nation-states survive the revolution: if nationalism proves to be a social force just as likely to transcend the communist faith as to be transcended by it—then indeed we are in a different and much more loosely conditioned world than Lenin ever foresaw. We are in

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a world in which, indeed, the outbreak of all sorts of conflicts becomes only too plausible, but in which the "inevitable" set-piece of a world wide communist/capitalist war is by no means an ineluctable *denouement.*

On top of all these unforeseen developments has come the astounding phenomenon of nuclear weapons. It is true that, as not only the Chinese but also every Marxist-Leninist is quick to point out, nuclear weapons do not in themselves alter social relations. If these relations really were, predictably, driving to a further bout of world war before the apparition of the new weapons, they would presumably continue to do so. All that the new weapons would do would be to make that *denouement* far more terrible. But here their dialectical training should come to the assistance of the communist leaders and preserve them from being impaled upon the simple logic of their own social philosophy. True, nuclear weapons are only a quantitative stepping up of the destructiveness of war. But a quantitative stepping up of this magnitude may be expected to make a qualitative change in the situation. Nuclear war is a different thing, with different consequences, from conventional war. As and when the present generation of mankind comes to realize this fact, profound changes in their attitudes to war and to violence in general may become apparent.

Do we not catch the dawning of a realization of this profound change in social reality in the Russian Government's new attitude to nuclear war, which, as we have seen, has, after a false start by Malenkov, been adopted by Mr. Khruschev, and has now been reiterated and given the stamp of orthodoxy in the controversy with the Chinese? That new attitude is based upon two different but related realizations. First, that full scale nuclear war may be expected to spare neither communist nor "imperialist;" that both will be engulfed in that "common ruin" of which the Communist Manifesto speaks as the only possible alternative to the successful emergence to power of new classes. And, second, that the development of new social relations, which is so evidently and undeniably going on in the world, may not after all involve a further bout of world war, now that we know that it would be nuclear war. How far the change of attitude is due to the apparition of nuclear weapons, and how far to the divergencies which world development has made from the Leninist prognosis I do not know. But that there has been a real change of

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attitude on the part of the Russians is undeniable: how otherwise can we account for the scandalization of the Chinese "Old Believers?"

In any event it is clear that, for whatever reasons, the dogma of the inevitability of further world war has been dropped by the Russian government. This is a major event. The old dogma did not indeed necessarily involve any immediate Russian aggression, for it was always modified by the caveat that the inevitable must be postponed as long as possible. Still, the dogma of the inevitability of a further world war was a profoundly vicious influence on Russian thinking, making any approach towards more genuine co-existence almost impossible. If we ask *why* the dogma has been abandoned we can only guess at an answer. Perhaps the realization of the impartiality of nuclear weapons was only the last straw which broke the back of the old dogmatists. It is forty-three years since the volcano of the October Revolution erupted. The lava has cooled.*

* Mr. Gomulka, the head of the Polish Government, speaking at Katowice on July 6th, 1960 and reprinted in full in *Polish Perspectives* for August-September, 1960 gave an indication of the various factors at work. (As often, the Polish communists prove to be the most articulate).

> "The policy of peaceful co-existence pursued by the Socialist states now has greater chances of victory than ever before. In the military domain such highly destructive weapons have been created that their use in the event of war would produce catastrophic results. The total destructive power of modern warfare constitutes a factor mobilizing the masses for the struggle against imperialism and intensifying the struggle of the peoples for peaceful co-existence. The generally known military superiority of the defensive power of the Soviet Union, demonstrated by the weight of its Sputniks and the precise functioning of its interplanetary and ballistic rockets, has caused even part of the imperialist bourgeoisie to reject war, although it realizes the growing possibilities of the triumph of Socialism in peaceful competition with capitalism. They see that the victory of Socialism in the future is a lesser evil for them than war, that war puts them and the entire capitalist system in danger of annihilation and all mankind in danger of incalculable consequences. The revolution in the realm of military weapons has created a new historical factor which must not be omitted in any evaluation of present day reality and the possibility of the triumph of the idea of peaceful co-existence."

But, lest this should sound too complacent, Mr. Gomulka hastens to make it clear that he considers that war can only be avoided by, first, agitation against it in the non-communist world and second by continually strengthening the communist world.

> "Peace cannot be obtained by pleading with the imperialists. Peace and peaceful co-existence can only be fought out. . . . If the Socialist

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What then should be our own reactions to this development of Russian intentions? First, we should have done once and for all with the pernicious nonsense that it is impossible to deal with Russia because she is "determined to attack us." But on the other hand we should delude ourselves if we supposed that Russia's transformation into an ordinary nation-state, even if it were completed (and it is far from complete) would solve the problem of the prevention of war in the nuclear age.

Even "run-of-the-mill-nation-states" are profoundly self-regarding organisms. They do not, usually, actually want war. But they usually want things which prove unattainable without war. It is said that when Bismarck was asked whether he wanted war, he replied, "Certainly not. What I want is victory." It may be surmised that, as a first very rough approximation, some such attitude as this has underlain many of the recent activities of the rulers of Soviet Russia. In this respect they have not differed very markedly from most rulers of most other states at most times. The rulers of states who, like Hitler have welcomed the prospect of war almost for its own sake, have been comparatively rare. What nearly all rulers of strong states have wanted was not war. What they have wanted was their way. And, like everybody else, they would have preferred to have their way with the minimum of trouble, risk and expense. They sincerely regretted it when, as so frequently happened, attempting to get their way did in fact involve them in war. But only the more sophisticated of them have been inclined to notice that as what they wanted usually contradicted flatly what some other state wanted, war was sooner or later bound to break out.

Insofar as the Russia of the 1960's is becoming a nation-state like another, it is inherently probable that the intentions of her rulers do not diverge very much from this familiar pattern. Russia, in my view, gives little evidence of being one of those exceptionally aggressive, predator, states of which Nazi Germany, Napoleonic France,

countries were weak, if the Soviet peoples had not built the might they possess today, the possibility of preventing a new world war would be slender; in fact there would be no such possibility at all."

Just how we are to "fight out" peace and peaceful co-existence is not explained. But Mr. Gomulka's general sense is clear enough. This is merely the communists' way of saying that they must "negotiate from strength."

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(in a milder way), or Assyria in the ancient world, are examples. Equally, however, she gives no evidence of being an exceptionally pacific state. (Examples of such exceptionally pacific states, at any rate amongst major powers, are much more difficult to find.) Russia gives the impression of being determined to have her way whenever she can, and of being not in the least averse to using force to get it, if she thinks she can do so without undue risk. On the other hand she gives evidence of taking the risks of nuclear war most seriously into account and of being loath indeed to incur them.

We may conclude that, again insofar as Russia is an ordinary nation-state, she must be dealt with, in default of the evolution of at least some rudimentary world authority, in the familiar way. Other states, that is to say, will be faced with the alternative of bowing to her will, or of developing sufficient military strength to deter her from actions to which they particularly object. This is all painfully familiar. But what is still more painful, and not at all familiar, is that the force involved on both sides is now nuclear force. True, a realization of what the consequences of nuclear war would be is growing and provides, by its dread, a certain barrier to war. But who can suppose that the barrier would in itself prove permanently adequate? The relationships of all nation-states, of whatever kind, have always been punctuated by war, merely it seems, because they were nation-states. There would therefore be little assurance of peace even on the assumption (and it would be today a premature assumption) that Russia was another nation-state like the rest, neither especially bellicose nor especially pacific. On the contrary a world of such "normal" nation-states must go to war sooner or later; primal international anarchy has always proved inherently unstable. For the world to remain indefinitely organized into completely sovereign nation-states in the nuclear age must prove fatal.

(This article is part of a continuing discussion on the problems of the cold war and the future of the West. There will be further discussion in future issues of PR.)

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POEMS

A WIDOWER

He still reads his paper in there; the john's what he comes home for.
The door kept locked the way some men keep a whore
Was his whore while his wife lived. Still up at eight,
In bed by ten. But now sometimes he's up late,
Biting his tongue to tears, to masturbate.

And now always his angina schreis like a boiling kettle.
His breath shrieks when he reaches to wash the newsprint away,
Still seated, from his cigar-stained fingers. Like rusted metal,
The white and gray tiles: a veined, brownish light gray.

When he tries to think of her face,
He sees the drops clinging to the faucet droop and ache.
He sees his shadow on the pebbled glass,
Covered with the tears he's held back.

Outside the door, his visiting granddaughter barks at the dog,
Asleep there, gassing and grumbling. One foot must be bare—
The other in what must be her grandmother's beach clog,
She slops down the hall rug. *She* should care?

The bathroom cares for him like a wife.
But his little legs, swastika-like
In black sharkskin, still run his coalyards and his life,
He has no say. His dry throat stabs him, like a spike

Of unpaid bills, counting the white tiles, then again the gray.
He'd like a cigar for every time that kvetch killed
Him in her dreams every day
And *knew* he knew it—and was thrilled!

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Except—the almost odorless warm sand and the smell of salt—
Where?—where they were happy. Atlantic City? L.A.?
The waves gush in fizzing, halt,
Trailing seaweed and sunlight, and flush away.

On its back, opened up, his billfold sweats on the damp tiles,
As if helpless, where it was dropped. His wife's snapshot smiles
Up from the floor—he opens the door. Turning gold-
Rimmed silver cartwheels on the hall rug, the blond child. . . .
Shocked by the static in his kisses, she starts to scold.

Frederick Seidel

WAY-STATION

Halfway through paradise
a bell rings, a clock strikes,
but there is no way of ending
this journey and not embarrassing
my father, there is no coat
of modesty to cover me.

There are tree avenues of
persuasion, there are coppices
of love which from the distance
had looked like hedgehogs, there
are also bells in my hands
still tinkling yuletide charms.

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Did you never travel before?
companions ask. But you are
allowed to be clad in shyness,
even if your father stopped over
to have a woman on the side,
you may pass in innocence.

Be a conqueror's son, the scene
advises, be now put to bed
with a stranger's daughter,
and be taught that love is
not naked but barbedly eternal
and a burden like a passport.

David Cornel DeJong

OPERA COMIQUE

This flea-bag *Monte Carlo* somehow fits
an aging queen's last opera comique
somewhere between twin comic-tragic masks
gilded in plaster on an old marquee.
The iron-meshed elevator creaks, oh, flirt,
who once knew *men,* now bitched by chorus boys
who only want to hear about the Prince.
Sometimes I wonder what they see in me.
Yet even though they snigger when I trot
out aigrettes, now illicit, too, for laughs,
Saint Mary-the-Virgin tinkles down the street
and makes false-faces fall apart like need.
As I did once, oh, long ago, my thoughts
sail on-stage seated on a crescent moon.
Be gay, Franz hisses from the wings as, trilling,
I descend that staircase in the Grand Finale
to tap my memories coyly with my fan.

Byron Vazakas

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Wright Morris

MAN ON THE MOON

From this fair prospect no perceptible line divides the sea from the sky. It is all of one piece. An orbiting spaceman might wonder which is which, and mistake his element. The color is like that of the sea in those paintings that hang in your mind rather than on the walls of museums. The beach, not at all crowded, has few bathers in the water: they lie basking in the sun or under umbrellas the color of shells. New cars, gleaming like trophies, screen the bathers and the sea from the highway where the traffic flows in one direction for Hollywood, in the other Malibu.

A choice of pipedreams? This is the country of dream merchants. A sense of affluence, even of leisure, of the peace that precedeth understanding, rises with the sound of the surf, the traffic hum. On the point where I stand facing the sea one should build a dream house, and many have. All around me are signs that the good work still goes on. Construction, in fact, is underway right at my back. It differs from the usual sort of dream house in that it will not rise, but descend. It will also be modest, dispensing with porches, windows, and light. While in it one will also dispense with the view. It is the last word—the very last word—in togetherness. One room less than ten feet square will sleep three, plus a cat and a dog. And the view? That will be there to greet you when you come out. That, perhaps, and very little else, since this dream-house is a fallout shelter.

"I figure it's worth what it costs," the builder told me, "if it makes the wife feel any better." Did he think it would? His eyes were on the hole gaping at his feet. He tipped his head suddenly for a look at the sky. From the shelter that would be his view. Up there, still visible, was the moon. "You think we'll put a man on it first?" he asked.

I nodded. Yes, indeedy, I thought so. In fact, I thought we'd had men on it for sometime. A lot of men. We had become a nation of men on the moon.

Less than a year ago a neighbor and I found solidarity in "fallout"

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humor. A glance at the evening sky was good for a laugh. We had our own pattern of survival, based on our cat food, his dog food, and the water stored in our hot water heaters. He would inject powdered coffee into his—I would spike mine with rum. Seated in the dark around the dripping spigots we would wait for the *all clear*. As we reasoned it would be. All clear of any sign of life.

A few weeks ago, seeing some bricks in his yard, I called out to ask how his "shelter" was going. He smiled. But a different smile. It was at me, now, not with me. He hadn't got around to it yet, he said, due to more pressing matters, but he was giving the project serious thought. The real problem was money. Such improvements to our way of life were not deductible. Not yet. But one day they would be, and when they were he would just as soon put one in as not. One might as well face the facts. Pending the fallout he could use it as a workshop.

The facts. Yes, yes, the facts. Determined to face the facts by all means, a local religious group, with the future in mind, combined their skills and resources to provide neighborhood school children, the little tots, with *fallout kits*. What they would need, that is, in case of a surprise attack. The kit contained a bite of candy, a bite of food, a change of underwear and socks, and a game or toy to play with until the attack had passed. This occasion was featured on television as an example to those who had taken no action, and whose children might be taken by surprise without candy, toys, or a change of socks.

The intent of this effort was commendable. Lacking from the kit, however, was any connection it might have with the disaster that threatened. Kits-for-the-kiddies was not different, in kind, from the fallout shelters overlooking the sea, within eyeshot of the calculated blast. Both actions function, if at all, as therapy. The mother hushing the child, the husband comforting the wife, the doctor reassuring the disturbed patient. Anything will do. Anything, that is, but the facts.

What became of these *facts?* In the thirteen years since Hiroshima have they become fiction, or got lost? How can Americans, under no news blackout, go about preparing candy-kits for kiddies as if atomic war was in the nature of a tropical storm, one of those big blows we infectiously give the names of girls. One that would soon blow over, the waters recede, and mothers would reappear in their station wagons and honk their horns.

The man who would smile at the kits for the kiddies soberly prepares his burrow in the basement, neatly lined with beer, cigarettes, and canned goods for ten or twelve days. The child, happily, suffers the smaller delusion. Both responses come under the awning of my Aunt

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Clara's voluminous apron. As a boy I took shelter there from disasters both real and imaginary. So did she. Often we were there at the same time. Confronted with my Uncle Harry's mad folly on the 4th of July, she would toss it like a hood over her head. A basic, and classic, tactic. One from which we have never departed. If you can't bear the sight of something, bury your head. In an age of operations we might call it Operation Ostrich.

It is no accident, however, that therapy, not facts, is the substance of our Civil Defense. Who wants to know the facts? It is the facts from which we need defense. The hundred thousand human beings who died in the experiment to see how the bomb really worked, inadvertently depressed—if nothing else—our celebrated lust for the facts. Science-fiction now pleases us more, and serves us better.

Science-fiction, in case you've forgotten, is what we used to get from H. G. Wells and Ray Bradbury. Currently, it is what we get from many vocal scientists. It is a strictly scientific interpretation of the facts.

Sometimes known as the Father of H-bomb, scientist Edward Teller in a recent interview, reassured his fellow men there was no reason for panic. Just a plain but sensible cause for alarm. Perhaps to counteract the prophesies of his fellow-scientist, Linus Pauling, who spoke of a ninety percent loss of life, Dr. Teller reassuringly spoke of a ninety percent survival. Maybe even more if we really hustled and followed his suggestions. Dr. Teller would have none of this Doomsday nonsense, and confidently said we would not only survive but that life would be fairly normal—just the way it is now, that is—in three or four years. Schools, factories, taxes and all of our cherished institutions. Everything the same. Including the same old prospect of nuclear war. Mr. Teller didn't say that, but if we're going to be the same *after* this next war as before it, you don't have to be a scientist to figure it out. In that respect Dr. Pauling's prophesy held the most hope.

Another Nobel scientist, Dr. Libby, not only gave advice of a constructive nature to counteract the defeatist tone of Dr. Pauling, but went so far as to follow it himself. In a hillside near his home in southern California he had built a shelter of sandbags and timber, very suitable for ur-mensch, spate-mensch, and small fry taking shelter from marauding Indians. We all saw it on TV. In it, snug as a bug in a rug, Dr. Libby and his loved ones would weather the storm.

The problem of all those *other* people's loved ones raised its ugly head on the same program. But that was a *moral* problem, not to be carelessly filed under fission and fallout. If you have a fallout shelter

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for three loved ones, plus a dog, but happen to be friendly with a *lot* of people—or even if you're *not* friendly—you better work on the moral problem before you face the first alarm. You better work fast—and maybe have a gun handy—since it won't help too much to have the law on your side. Out of deference to the feelings of the audience, I'm sure, all the talk was about getting *into* your shelter—not coming *out* of it. It was all very hopeful and reassuring, and I can't explain the feeling I came with away with—that Dr. Linus Pauling, the old spoilsport, was the only man dealing with the *horrible* facts. The reassuring, hopeful facts were something else. Available to any man who wanted to sift them were facts that needed no scientist to interpret: facts that most scientists, as men, found it difficult to face.

Although these "interpretations" were contradictory they had one important fact in common. The scientists spoke the same language. A language of percentages. Ninety percent incinerated, or ninety percent salvaged, was a slight difference of opinion, but still ninety percent. They had no semantic problems. Ninety percent *would,* or ninety percent *wouldn't,* a simple statement of the facts. Put in a somewhat more hopeful, reassuring way, *only* ten percent might be destroyed. What? Only *ten* percent? We have Dr. Edward Teller's word for it. If that is so, what in the world is the fuss all about?

Ten percent? Let's see what it figures. About seventeen million in nice round numbers. It does sort of add up. If you translate that into seventeen million single or married separate human beings, one of whom might be *you,* some of whom might be *yours,* it seems a lot more than ten percent. A lot more—but still a little hard to grasp.

How do we go about it? Well, they tell us there were some six million Jews. Seventeen million Americans would be just about three times that many. Does that facilitate things, as we say? Not much. No, the problem seems to lie not in the slaughter but in the percentage. Figures may not lie, but do they tell us the human truth? Ten, twenty, forty, sixty, ninety *percent,* is not a disaster but a simple percentage. A bloodless fact. Something the criminal and the prosecution can grasp. The percentage—we realize with relief—is something calculable. The slaughter—we realize with horror—is unimaginable. And so we come, or at least I come, to what I find at the heart of the matter. We no longer confront an imaginable threat, a conceivable horror, a comprehensible disaster. No, we are faced with one that is merely calculable.

It has been some time coming—this new world—but now it is here. The lineaments of it began to appear in such innocent guise as the

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decimal system—a way, among others for organizing knowledge, cataloguing books. Then it seemed to be the province of space—outer space. One could not imagine it. No, one could only calculate. The moon is so-and-so big, a star is so-and-so far, and the Milky Way is—well, the Milky Way is inconceivable. Under the dark hood of the planetarium does the human mind feel wonder or terror? Perhaps both. From the loudspeaker drone the relevant facts, the statistics. The word from outer space—if we want it—we already have. It is *data*. One cannot imagine it. One can only calculate.

In human terms this dilemma is embodied in the trial of Adolph Eichmann, accused of the murder of six million Jews. We say the enormity of the crime staggers the imagination. But it does more. It stupefies. We feel little more than the blow on our own head. Adolph Eichmann is the first man to be put on trial for the murder of statistics. I hope he is the last. Statistics will twist our minds, but never wring our hearts. The murder of one man is still enough to tax our sense of mercy, and overpower our sense of justice. It would seem to be idle, however well intended, to try a man or a crime we cannot comprehend. Six million human beings. We do not grasp it. If we did, we would be monsters. The war criminal, the crimes of war, shrink rather than expand our concepts of justice. Statistics, calculable in advance, make it impossible to deal with murder on our highways. A death toll—like a bridge toll—is something one accepts and pays.

It is not a loss of nerve that confronts man, but a failure of the human imagination. The mind is not scaled to the facts it is obliged to face. It is why machines have been devised to deal with such details. Few Americans, if any, can speak from experience of atomic war—but even if we could we could speak only of statistics, of data. The number dead or wounded, the number calculated to survive. We cannot speak effectively of a ruin we cannot imaginatively grasp.

If we are dealing with facts we cannot comprehend, it is no wonder we deal with them so badly, or speak, as we do, one moment as if sane, another as if mad. Between poetry and paranoia it is often difficult to distinguish. Our most comprehensive grasp of the *facts* is reflected in the paradox of our unpreparedness. We were told—and we sensibly believed—there was no defense. There was nothing for man to do but abolish war itself. Unhappily, since that has never been done there is no precedent for man to follow. Quite simply, we do not know how to take the first step. Disarmament, unfortunately, is the last, and it will remain a pipedream so long as we think we must take the last step first.

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The facts of nuclear war, like those of a "lasting peace," the private preserve of the politician, have one instructive element in common—the prospects of such a heaven, and such a hell, both exceed the realistic range of our imagination. But war, for this reason, lies within our grasp—just as peace does not. The familiar horrors of peace weigh more heavily on some men than the unfamiliar horrors of war, since one they know, personally, and the other is beyond the telling of it. Propaganda against war has always failed because man cannot imagine his own annihilation: he knows about dying, but nothing to speak of about death. Not his own.

Somewhere Rebecca West speaks of *lunacy* as a madness peculiar to women, originating in the female's poetic, as well as periodic, affinity with the moon. The madness of men, idiocy, originates in this lack of planetary commitments, but thanks to science it is undergoing a change. Moon-madness now lies within the male's expanding orbit. Any male. For the time being the female is out. A word for such men is happily not lacking, but the word Astronaut doesn't cover the orbit. With the future in mind, I would like to suggest the word Luna-Tik. Strictly speaking, the Luna-Tik is one who is persuaded that a man on the moon would solve the earth's problems. One of *our* men, of course. Not one of theirs.

If this suggestion holds any data we are already a nation of Luna-Tiks, since it is the only project we have that might be called a *National* project. The money has been voted. The lights burn long in the laboratories. Scarce a week goes by a rocket doesn't go up, and data doesn't come back. You can't eat it, or drink it, or take it in your arms, but if you're an *echt* Luna-Tik you don't want to. You want to get away from all that, and if you're Luna enough you probably will.

Owing to certain frailties of the human mind an idea is good or bad, right or wrong, sane or insane, lunatic or idiotic, according to how many people believe in it. Operation Moon, a bit of neurotic behavior for which clinical terms are not lacking, is now the endorsed program of a nation of one hundred and seventy million people. Moonlight is now the daylight of our time. We see the facts, if at all, in this spectral light. We share a madness as common as that recently proclaimed at Berchtesgaden, the klieg-lit looney bin of Herr Hitler's Gotterdammerung. Nations as well as individuals fall under the spell of some unearthly prospect, sometimes slanted in the direction of heaven, sometimes toward hell. Today it is the scientist, rather than the poet, who burns with a romantic agony.

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Once the sole property of the moonlit garden, or the lamplit garret, romantic agony is now the prerogative of the laboratory and the men in white. They make gas, they make bombs, they make machines to do our thinking for us, and if one asks them *why* they do it, they have one reply—they *must*. It is a question of the impartial pursuit of truth. The scientist's principles demand that he pursues it even if it leads to annihilation. But that is something of an understatement. It is better to say that the devotee pursues it *knowing* that it leads to annihilation. The truth if it kills you: if it kills you it must be the truth. True romantic agony could hardly be better practiced, or more accurately defined.

A small question does arise. Is a man in space—a *man?* If gravity does not hold him, if ties do not bind him, if the sun does not warm him and the moon does not thrill him—is he a man? Is not this what all of the *experiments* are about? Not merely if he will stay alive—but alive as a *man?*

Marvel of marvels, outwondering wonder, and perhaps outlasting horror, is the singular fact that man, of all creatures, is of the earth the most earthy. The eagle and the mole, the fish and the termite meet in him. In his blood a solution of salt still links him with the sea. His most ethereal flights are earth-centered and earth inspired. His notions of space, of Time, of God—matters he considers the most unearthly—are but seeds of his earthbound mind, blown by the wind. "I remember well the time," Darwin wrote, "when the thought of the eye made me cold all over."

In this scientist the poet was not dead. The thought of the eye—that miraculous lens where both the sun and the moon trace their orbits—is still the mirror, and the measure, of man's universe. Eternity still lies in Blake's grain of sand. That being so, is there any reason Man should not rocket in space if he wants to? Or live, or die, on the moon—if he thinks he must?

One of the freedoms in which I believe is that of man to make an ass of himself. Happily, many still do. The problem does not lie in his practice so much as his conviction: his belief that he is in possession of the truth.

Whether man can build an island in space, or live on the moon, is not a proposition I want to question. Man is very clever. Some day I'm sure he will. The question I have in mind is related to those spirits said to inhabit old English manor houses, frightening the guests with thumps on the floor, flickering lights at the top of the stairs, and making

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assorted noises all designed to disturb your sleep. Poltergeists. My query is not whether these ghosts are true or false, but whether they are sensible or idiotic. What good is a disembodied spirit who can do no more than a disgruntled milkman? Disturb your sleep. The way Luna-Tiks disturb mine. I happen to love the moon both for what, and where, it is. Its beauty lies in its inaccessibility. I don't doubt that man will soon be there, and one day have its dark face lit up with signboards—my question is, is this sensible or idiotic? Is it one of man's sublime illusions, or a recurrently infantile delusion? That is my question, but already, alas, I know the answer. The lips will smile and say, *we will know when we get there*. Ah, yes. The way we know about Everest, now it is conquered, and the way we know about Hiroshima after the bomb.

When a man lifts his eyes to the sky today, what does he see? The moon a clinker, the sun a ball of gas, the planets orbiting prizes in the war for space, possible sources of minerals, funerals, and interesting suburban developments, just a few rocket hours from wherever you work.

Between a dream and a nightmare the line is as thin as the skin of our teeth. A litmus test will not distinguish. Percentages will not help. The old cloud of unknowing has been displaced by the haze of knowing too much. Or is it too little? There seem to be opposing forms of knowledge. To the question—*What is the grass?*—one man replies it is the flag of his disposition, or the uncut hair of the graves. The other man smiles. He finds that a very curious form of knowing. His eye on the lens, the test tube, the spectrum, he seeks for the facts. The *facts?* Just what—for men—are the facts?

One man, Robert Graves, puts it like this—

'Nowadays' is a civilization in which the prime emblems of poetry are dishonored. In which serpent, lion and eagle belong to the circus tent; ox, salmon and boar to the cannery; racehorse and greyhound to the betting ring; and the sacred grove to the sawmill. In which the moon is despised as a burned-out satellite of the earth and woman reckoned as 'auxiliary State personnel.' In which money will buy almost anything but the truth, and almost anyone but the truth possessed poet.

We speak often, 'nowadays,' of the American way of life. I should like to ask if we think it is something more, or something less, than human? The query is not idle. Life in space is not human life. It will be man-made, but that, as we know, can be quite the contrary of what we judge to be human. But not everyone is human. Not even everybody seems to want to be.

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To *un*-make man, as we have found, is a comparatively simple matter—but to make him, to make him *human,* that is, is more complex than we think. Where do we begin? With the earth or the moon? With the sawmill or the sacred grove? Very old questions. Perhaps we have despaired of answering them.

Here in Southern California two native industries have taken fresh heart at the threat of extinction—the art of prophecy, and the builders of swimming pools. Both feel they can quickly convert to the Age of Fallout. First things first: a crystal ball, a hole in the ground.

This earth already being an overcrowded place, I would like to suggest that those who have despaired should be openly encouraged to go elsewhere. Anywhere. One small stipulation. Let it be one way. No question there is *Lebensraum* for all in outer space. Those who feel compelled to go there should not be detained. If I could write my own ticket it would include one bona-fide Space scientist, one bona-fide Luna-Tik, and one smiling housewife with hands as lovely as her daughter's. If it's a *big* rocket, and there's room, I'd throw the daughter in too.

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a quarterly magazine of the theatre

Partial Contents of the Current Issue

On the Nature of Theatre . . . . . Max Frisch
Friedrich Duerrenmatt and Max Frisch . . . . George Wellwarth
The Theatre of Harold Pinter . . . . . Bernard Dukore
The World of Harold Pinter . . . . . Ruby Cohn
The Art of Acting: "What's Hecuba to Him?" . Frederik Schyberg
Letters . . . . . Georg Büchner
Georg Büchner's *Danton's Death* . . . . . Lee Baxandall
An Unfashionable View of Tennessee Williams . . William Sharp
Guiscard and Oedipus . . . . . E. L. Stahl
Robert Guiscard (TDR Play) . . . . . Heinrich von Kleist
Four Hamlets of the 19th Century American Stage, Part I:
Thomas A Cooper and J. B. Booth (TDR Document) . . . .

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David Riesman

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE DISCONTENTED CLASSES

SOME FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Seven years ago in the pages of *Partisan Review*, Nathan Glazer and I sought to explain McCarthyism, and especially its attack on the intellectuals, less in terms of the Korean War and the problems of foreign policy than in terms of endemic strains in American life. We discussed the growing power of intellectuals in a complicated society and the vulnerability and availability of this group to Right Wing attack. We interpreted McCarthy and other Right Wing leaders as radical demagogues, seeking opportunistically and somewhat randomly for constituencies and targets, and discovering both in the new alignments created in American life by a prosperous economy supported by war industry, by German and Irish resentment of both World Wars, and by the discovery that charges of domestic Communism enabled politicians to seem strong, rough and effective without actually having a program.

The essay, along with others of somewhat similar bearing, was included in the volume, *The New American Right*, edited by Daniel Bell; and the planned reissue of that volume has been the occasion for my re-examination of the earlier essay in terms of what has occurred since and what now seems mistaken in what we wrote.

The original essay was criticized by many readers for seeking the sources of American discontent only in America, and primarily in irrational motives, rather than seeing this discontent as a rational response to Communist aggressions. I still think we were right to emphasize strains endemic to American life, strains which, to be sure, the Cold War intensified but did not create. However, today it is quite clear that the Cold War and the revolutionary ferment in the world which both feeds on and inflames the Cold War have radically altered the position both of the intellectuals and of the discontented classes in American domestic politics. Certainly any effort to separate domestic from foreign policy is arbitrary, especially in a democracy. Yet there are

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also internal developments, only marginally influenced by events abroad, that have been important in altering the political and the intellectual climate: I think especially of the whole speed of change in the South, including the fight over desegregation, of the increasing gap between the generations produced by differential education and experience, and of the consequences of electing an aggressive anti-clerical Irish Catholic to the presidency.

To take the last of these first, the election has strengthened an alliance attempted but never consummated in the pre-War era: that between Protestant and Catholic fundamentalism. As a conservative, an at least nominal Republican, a general, and a man of old-fashioned budget-balancing morality, Eisenhower could for a time reassure various old-guards in American life that they need not bother their heads about politics. Such people might crusade locally to prevent the fluoridation of water (which some regarded as a Communist-capitalist plot and an invasion of the "states' rights" inherent in every human body). And such people might make sure that there were various subjects, such as the recognition of Red China, that it was impolitic for school teachers, librarians, or Congressmen to raise. However, public opinion pollers in the 1956 presidential election campaign reported a wide-spread torpor, even an incipient "era of good feeling;" and in the early Eisenhower era the call for national purpose trumpeted by a few intellectuals and publicists seemed as out of place as an evangelist at a country club.

As Samuel Lubell has pointed out on the basis of his surveys, this complacency was jarred, first by Sputnik, then by the dramatic rise of Khrushchev, and most recently by Castro. President Kennedy fought his campaign on the basis of an ascetic insistence on sacrifice, reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt's belief in strenuousness, in American destiny, and in patrician and intellectual responsibility. His victory released the Republican radical Right and the fundamentalist Democrats North and South from many of the quite mild restraints that Eisenhower's presence had imposed, while bringing into office and thereby more or less "muzzling" a number of the most influential spokesmen for a liberal politics. Thus while Kennedy's election antagonized some businessmen, evangelical Protestants, and others who had felt less threatened under Eisenhower, it diminished the possibility of a liberal and radical opposition. For, a little like de Gaulle in France, Kennedy on the one hand seemed a protection against pressures from the American Poujadists and the other discontented classes, while at the same time he appeared to embrace many of the hopes of the intellectuals.

Indeed some of the latter have even thought that the new Ad-

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ministration is itself primarily one of intellectuals. But I think it important to distinguish between the extremely intelligent professional and academic men recruited by Kennedy and the intellectuals, that is, those men who, whatever their field, take part in and contribute to general ideas and speculative thought. (There are certainly members of the latter group in the new Administration, but they are few and mainly located abroad or otherwise out of harm's way.) The academic men of the Administration possess the style and dash of well-educated, lucid and restive cosmopolitans; they are at home in Europe and many see a global mission for America, sometimes a stabilizing and sometimes an expanding and policing one. Their revival of an earlier belief that the country, like an individual, needs a purpose, that America is too affluent and indolent, and that we are in a race with Communism that can only be won by tireless and resourceful assertiveness—all this is in many respects a new morality, quite out of keeping with Abilene or even with the traditional service academies, even though, as I have indicated, one can find cruder precursors of it in the first Roosevelt and also, despite his more exigent moralism, in Woodrow Wilson.

In general it would seem that the center of gravity of discontent has shifted upwards in the status system. True, hidden beneath the bulging middle of our middle-class society are millions of disinherited citizens, the aged and infirm and unskilled, the Negroes and Puerto Ricans and Southern poor whites; but save for the increasingly vigorous Negro protest movements, most of these millions are isolated and unorganized, as yet unavailable as constituencies for radical political leadership. In Senator McCarthy's movement, as others have pointed out, there were elements of a soured obscurantist Populism; in many parts of the country McCarthy, the fighter, the good Joe, the exposer of Establishment shams, had a working-class and lower-middle-class following which responded not to his program, for he had none, but to his methods, his tone and targets. Today's radical Right Wing in contrast appears to draw much of its membership as well as its financial and polemical backing from far more well-to-do strata. It would seem that the small businessmen who belong to the John Birch Society are on the whole, like the Texas oil rich who backed McCarthy, small businessmen in the sense of having limited educations and little experience as managers in a complex world—but they are not poor: one can own a small trucking or real estate firm or candy company and still amass millions—and be encouraged to believe that one did it all by oneself. Even more menacing are the indications that a few large corporations have found that anti-Communism is no longer "contro-

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versial" but can bring in sales and good will, so that hitherto cautious corporate officials who undoubtedly supported Eisenhower and after him, Nixon, now may listen to the peddlers of propaganda films and educational materials like those General Walker thought his divisions in Germany required. Furthermore, while many of the scientists and other staff men who work for the big missile and electronics companies are apolitical and at times quite cynical about their work (and a very few actively favor arms limitation), some may be grateful for the ideological justification provided by that Right Wing brain trust, swelled by former Communists who have seen the light, without which Senator McCarthy himself would not have known the First Amendment from the Fifth Amendment or a Trotskyite from a Social Fascist.

To be sure, it remains true that the growing minority of old people who feel rejected, disoriented, impoverished and resentful are ready to applaud an anti-political movement that promises to reorganize the world so that the old folks can understand it again. Many of them, less well educated than their children or even the entertainers who nightly abuse them on television, are grateful for the simplistic, evangelistic messages of anti-Communism, which affirm that their hearers are the really good Americans, whatever their ethnicity, whatever their failure to live up to the American dream of youthfulness, competence, love and success. These disinherited elders may also be willing to applaud a speaker who denounces the income tax, though the denunciation may matter more to them than the target. But it remains a question whether the rich reactionaries and the poor oldsters can form a united front around the anti-Communist issue when what they actually want from society is quite different.

In many communities, notably in the South and Southwest, extremely rapid urbanization and industrialization (often indeed based on or growing out of defense activities) have disrupted the already fragile social structure, so that there is no old elite sufficiently in charge of affairs to say "nobody is going to beat up Freedom Riders in this town and nobody's going, in the name of anti-Communism, to push librarians and school teachers around either." It is notable that perhaps the first public opposition to the John Birch Society came in Santa Barbara from a very old man, a newspaper publisher who had grown up with the community and who assumed responsibility for civic decency when no one else would. (Papers owned by the staff or by a chain are often too impersonal for this sort of free enterprise.) The fluid social structure in many expanding communities both creates anxiety and bewilderment and as well as opening opportunities for aggressive po-

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litical activism among the newly awakened and the newly rich who suddenly have discovered the uses of literacy. The situation allows new converts to the dangers of domestic Communism to practice their skills of intimidation locally, heckling at SANE meetings, expunging a text book that mentions the United Nations, or setting students to spy on their professors at the local Teachers College. Meanwhile, they watch the political horizon in search of a national leader comparable to McCarthy, scanning Senators Goldwater and Thurmond, hopeful about General Walker, but not yet solidified behind a single national leader.*

But they have found a national—and a nationalist cause—in an anti-Communism whose belligerent frenzy and incomprehension is often vaguely reminiscent of the extravagances of Frenchmen in Algeria or of Japanese militarists before Pearl Harbor. Since this country has never been seriously hurt by war, except for the one it fought with itself (and which we are now turning into a nostalgic celebration), and since most Americans have been in my opinion grossly mis-educated about the world during the Cold War years, the radical Right can always insist that the Administration is following a policy that is insufficiently belligerent, insufficiently tough and dynamic. In fact, Kennedy shared, during his campaign, the Right Wing picture of America as being pushed around by Khrushchev and Castro, and as suffering defeat after defeat in the Cold War, a tendentious picture that ignores the troubles of the Communists in the Congo and elsewhere and that proceeds from tacit premises of omnipotence or total rather than limited containment. The real chance of the Right Wing will come, it would seem, with the underlining of this picture through further changes in the world balance of power and in the unaligned countries that can be interpreted as defeats for us and victories for a monolithic Communism. While it may in general be true that the masses never prefer a policy that requires war and sacrifice, it is possible today that, if the fear of Communism and nuclear war becomes sufficiently intense, many Americans will leap eagerly to short-cuts that promise to get things over with.

Or they will hunt for scapegoats—and it may well be that Castro has become such a scapegoat, who can be ostracized and bullied be-

* This is a perennial problem of the Right Wing and perhaps of all extremist groups. The authoritarianism, suspiciousness, and even mild paranoia that drive people into the Right Wing also drive them into suspicion of each other. Hitler's accomplishment lay in part in bringing to his banner the gifted Goebbels and Goering and later Speer, whereas the American Right Wing has not yet been able to unite behind a team with such diversified abilities.

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cause he stands for the bigger bully who is at once less available and more threatening. (Castro himself may be glad to exploit his role as scapegoat in order to bind more firmly to him both the Communists powers on whom he has become dependent and the Latin Americans and many others who will be brought to his side if he can provoke the United States sufficiently so that we in turn will contine to respond vindictively rather than magnanimously.) Indeed, candidate Kennedy's energetic election campaign drove him toward this very trap, not only by his specific attacks against Communism "ninety miles from home," but also by the general tenor of his criticisms of a do-nothing, easy-going Administration. (His election coincided with the defeat of a number of liberal Democratic Congressmen, such as Byron Johnson, Charles Porter, and William Meyer, who had belonged in Congress to the small, brave but not willful band of "peace Congressmen." Their defeat also reflected the arousal of Protestant fundamentalist bigotry against a Catholic in the White House even in areas where it was all right for a Catholic to occupy the State House.)

In the last years of the benign Eisenhower Presidency, his supporters themselves had tended to grow somewhat restless and disaffected. Though their Republican ideology favored decentralization and federal inaction, even men of the type who would enjoy Eisenhower's company at golf or hunting or bridge in South Georgia, had become uneasy at the growing signs that the United States could no longer play world policeman with impunity; or that we might some day be unable to roll back the tide of Communist advance while going about our business as before. Hence the propaganda about national purpose began to hit home among those who once would have thought a national purpose a violation of laissez-faire and perhaps a form of spurious religiosity as well—as if the new nationalism of the rising nations (including the Communist ones) were being echoed here at home just as other militant nationalistic tactics were becoming attractive in the name of freedom. Thus Eisenhower left for the country, and for his successor, a legacy of feeling that there ought to be someone in charge, perhaps the more so since there was obviously no one in charge of our sprawling metropolises, our wasting natural resources, and our increasingly complicated and ambiguous ties to the rest of the globe. Eisenhower and good times together helped to revive still powerful currents of evangelical fervor, traditionally hostile to cities, complexity, foreigners, "softness," irreligion, and skepticism toward crusades. And, as suggested in the earlier essay, the old-American Puritan virtues can now often be trumpeted by

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Catholics and other newer Americans who thus establish their superiority to earlier, better educated but "decadent" families.

Seven years ago it appeared to us that a holding game against the Communists was frustrating but endurable. Since then, Soviet Communism has broken away from Stalin's paranoia, caution, and brutality and seems at once more flexible and more difficult to understand; it is also much better armed, militarily if not ideologically. At the same time, as I have sought to emphasize, President Kennedy has broken out from the limits imposed on American policy by the provincial, relaxed, but at the same time restricting morality of his predecessor. Kennedy has exceptional gifts of virtuosity, drive, charm and impatience; and he and his advisors have a grasp of the world far more differentiated and supple than the narrow moralism of John Foster Dulles. In addition, the new Administration is deeply committed to civil rights, as both a domestic and foreign policy imperative, and it is naturally oriented toward civil liberties as a necessity for a civilized and sophisticated world power. President Kennedy is anything but a demagogue, as his debates with Nixon showed, nor is he an indignant ideologue. Nevertheless, his rhetoric of activism speaks to the mood of many in the discontented classes; and since he has in some measure freed himself from his predecessor's budgetary and other controls, the anti-Communism of the radical Right can always appear to be an extension of the Administration's doctrine to its logical conclusion—a conclusion from which, as the Right would say, the Administration itself draws back only from softness, inconsistency, treason or incompetence.

This constellation may be one factor that helps impell the Administration toward limited and paramilitary measures, whether in Cuba or in South Vietnam, which antagonize much of the rest of the world, especially the non-white formerly colonial world.* And this antagonism then seems to Americans at once as utterly bewildering and grossly ungrateful, polarizing us still further from the rest of the world and thus feeding discontent simultaneously at home and abroad. Indeed it may well be that this Administration, far more cosmopolitan and world-minded than the country at large, may serve to isolate us

* I recognize that there are reasons quite apart from domestic politics for each of these actions. Thus we are pressured to act in South Vietnam on the one side by Communist guerilla tactics and on the other, by fear for all our Asian allies with whom we are linked in military pacts. And we are pressed to act in Cuba by shaky Central and South American states. But I am emphasizing above the domestic pressures that are one factor in the decision to select among available peripheral targets at the outposts of Communist empire.

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from the world more than did an Administration dominated by the fiscal conservatism and small-mindedness of men like George Humphrey and "Engine Charley" Wilson. This is all the more likely since Communism is no longer confined to Stalin's highly limited, paranoid isolationism. And can anyone foretell the reaction here at home, or the situation abroad, once the Chinese Communists gain nuclear weapons? While we and the Soviet Union (abetted by the French) are running an accelerated arms race, discontented groups within each of the two super powers or their allies help provoke their opposite numbers in the adversary country and thus lend justification to a program of increased militancy at home and abroad.

In this perspective, it would appear that in the earlier essay Mr. Glazer and I may have underestimated to some degree the impact of foreign policy and with such issues as "who lost China" in supporting McCarthyism. But what I still would emphasize is that we deal here, not with foreign affairs in the abstract, but with specifically American reactions to solutions that must be less than total solutions, or indeed to any ambiguous and inevitably tragic outcomes. As C. Vann Woodward pointed out a few years ago, only the South is "un-American" in having suffered defeat, in having lacked the extrapolative dynamic of industrialism, and in having gained in these ways a sense of the limits on human action. Yet, despite much talk of states' rights and individual freedom, the South does not today seem aware of the wisdom of these limits. It has certainly made no effort to control its own booming industrialization, nor its combination of sectional irredentism and nationalist belligerence. And while before the Second World War the South was perhaps the most pro-British, pro-free trade, and interventionist part of the country, today it may be the most tariff minded, the most anti-British (whenever Britain tries to moderate the Cold War), and in addition, the most hostile to Latin American revolution.*

As W. J. Cash angrily reminds his readers in *The Mind of the South*, the South was not even before the Civil War the stable social order, governed by Tidewater gentry, that magnolia mythology presents. The Southern white college students, as various surveys have shown, seldom share either the prejudices or the passions of their vocal

* The South (not counting Texas) was also anti-McCarthy, while today it offers to support various Right Wing crusaders who, whatever their nominal political color, are equally opposed to the Democratic Party of President Kennedy.

I recognize that the voting South is a minority, and that those who claim to speak for the South speak for a minority; the entire South has changed less rapidly than its articulate and organized cadres.

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elders. And the Negro college students increasingly fail to adopt the passivities and covert compromises of their elders.

Our *PR* essay was written before the desegregation decision had made itself felt in the South, and shortly thereafter, in connection with the Fund for the Republic study of academic freedom, I visited, though only for a day, the Greensboro Agricultural and Technical College where a few years later the first sit-ins began. From my visit and from what I was told by other observers, I would not have expected the sit-ins to start in an institution where most of the students appeared to be satisfied to enter the lower ranks of the "Black Bourgeoisie" and where their apparently docile patriotism comforted and confirmed the established leadership, Negro and white alike. That same year, I analyzed several hundred interviews of college seniors at twenty colleges and universities throughout America in which the students had described what they looked forward to in life fifteen years hence; I reported the complacency, amiability, and tolerance, and lack of ideological and political concerns of most of these respondents.* From such material, I certainly did not expect the rise of student protest movements that has taken place on many campuses, today still small in number but not small in vigor and impact. When I came to Harvard four years ago, an effort to found a chapter of student SANE was temporarily abandoned thanks to disruption by a group of Young Republicans (who intervened much as Communists used to take over liberal organizations); presently, as I write these lines, Harvard students have taken active leadership in planning a demonstration in Washington [February 1962] and three hundred students at this notably skeptical, cool, and sophisticated college have voluntered to go.

Students in America are not a class nor do they speak for a class (though in the Negro community they are able, perhaps, to speak for a race). Their tendency toward acting outside of conventional parliamentary channels may represent their feeling that they are living in an occupied country—and indeed those students who have been abroad, whether in the Peace Corps or in such predecessors as the Experiment in International Living, are often well aware that the climate of debate in this country concerning Cold War issues has become extremely constricted, more so in my opinion even than at the height of McCarthyism. For at that time, the very virulence, unpleasantness, and demagoguery of McCarthy led, if not to counter-attack or even to solidarity, at least to a general feeling of disgust and distrust among liberal intellectuals and

* See "The Found Generation," *The American Scholar*, Vol. 25, 1956, pp. 421-436.

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many conservatives. McCarthy, however, was not interested in the Cold War but only in the dissatisfactions within America, including the exploitable grievances of rising ethnic minorities. Today, in contrast, the Kennedy Administration focusses much if not most of its attention on the Cold War, and the very attractiveness and elan of this Administration tend to mute liberal and radical dissent. World Communism is a real and not a factitious adversary, and perhaps it is easier to unify the country against Communism abroad than against people who are extravagantly alleged to be Communists at home. In any case, many leading intellectuals have been hesitant to plumb the depths of their own misgivings about the Kennedy Administration: in the nuclear age their fears for the future have a nightmarish quality, and as the Cold War consensus develops they are understandably troubled by the prospects of becoming alienated and powerless. When the President expresses their more utopian hopes, as he sometimes does, they are cheered; when he moves in the opposite direction, they blame his advisors.

The young radical students, in contrast, are much more quick to be alienated from an Administration that raised their expectations but, as in Cuba and South Vietnam, appears to be rather more militaristic than Eisenhower's. The older generation of intellectuals has suceeded almost too well in dissecting and demolishing Communism and its fronts, and liberal hopefulness and trust also, and many of the young students are impatient with our prudence and historical awareness which they regard as pussy-footing at best and witch-hunting at worst. The enormous changes that have overtaken America in the last few years have separated many young people from their elders rather more than generations are usually divided, and each generation in the presence of the other feels insecure and perplexed.

At the same time, the dominant academic liberalism of the major metropolitan centers, combined with the vitality and activity of the new protest groups, has helped bring into being the new organizations of Right Wing students for whom in an earlier day college itself would have been simply the dormitory and locale for their fun and games. One could even argue that the change in the style of student Right Wing activities reflects the increasing intellectual power of academic liberalism. For in the past the Right Wing students tended to conduct themselves in a prankish, mindless way, and some still do; but more and more the Right Wing students are armored with facts and they throw arguments in the way that the pre-War semi-Fascist hoods would throw punches or in the way that Southern segregationist mobs will still shout "nigger lover." (To be sure, there are still plenty of less articulate Right

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Wingers who are satisfied to shout "better Red than dead" or "we want more bombs.") For example, I have encountered students who have the great forensic ability to cite Communist abuses and treacheries—students who, on graduation if not before, can take part in the many seminars, schools, and other more or less intellectual apparatuses of today's anti-Communist movements. While Father Coughlin and his followers gathered in small groups or cells to listen to his broadcasts and receive instructions, his sermons made no real attempt at intellectual analysis, any more than McCarthy's speeches and hearings did. The speed of change is perhaps reflected in the astonishment of a number of priests and other religious, teaching at Catholic colleges, who are beleaguered by student admirers of the John Birch Society or of Barry Goldwater—neither John Birch or Goldwater being, as one Jesuit Priest wryly put it, one of the boys as Joe McCarthy was.*

I am not clear in my own mind as to the weight in these various fragmentary movements of the ideological component. Among the sit-in and disarmament groups, there is often a rejection of ideology and complexity and a preference for a single issue simply seen—though there is often also a more scholarly and searching attempt to cope with issues, particularly in the field of disarmament and foreign policy. On the Radical Right, as already indicated, there is a stronger attempt than heretofore to support attitudes with ideology or at least with slogans and superficial information; there is more fanaticism and less fooling around. As people become aware of their national defenselessness in the nuclear age, the militant may feel the need of ideas even while they fear them. The general educational and intellectual upgrading of our population as a whole also forces Right Wing groups to pay more attention to ideas or the semi-balance of ideas.

Any effort to explain in social psychological terms a political or cultural movement runs the risk of making it appear too rational, too much a response to external circumstance. I now think that in our earlier essay the very effort to understand the mentality of the Radical Right placed too much emphasis on the ties between the New Dealers

* I don't intend here to imply that Goldwater and the John Birch Society are alike; indeed, at a recent meeting Goldwater was picketed by a Radical Right organization carrying signs saying, "We want war . . . Red Russia must not survive." Goldwater's sometimes humorous and genial tone lacks that blend of exigent Protestant fundamentalism and witch-doctor academese ("each and every" Harvard graduate; "known Comsymp") that attracts to the John Birch Society or other anti-political groups some of the uneasy new rich whose achievements have outrun their anticipations.

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and a few Communists or alleged Communists such as Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White. For the fanatical true believers of the Radical Right, convinced of their own powerlessness and cynical about politicians and big shots, the discovery of a few actual spies and compromised bureaucrats was perhaps not essential; for such an audience, even so inveterate an anti-Communist as Dean Acheson could be made to appear traitorous. Beyond such circles, however, with their crusading wildness, the disorientation of accustomed outlooks stimulated by such events as the Hiss case was important, providing McCarthy and his allies with a gloss of rationality and demoralizing many liberals, whether or not they had had any contact with the Communist Party or front organizations. Looking inward at their own mistakes, moreover, as lack of power often leads the reflective and the vulnerable to do, some articulate and self-conscious intellectuals who have left the party or various splinter groups have remained preoccupied with liberal guilt, innocence, or disingenuousness in the period of the 1930's and 1940's (and have perhaps exaggerated these). And while it is obviously important to reach a better understanding of our individual and collective past, there is the danger that many liberal intellectuals have become fixated in the past and are distracted from imagining a better future by the gnawing need to cope with vestiges of domestic Communist contamination as well as with the live embers of McCarthyism. In practical politics, for instance in the peace movement, these vestiges and embers create difficult questions for strategy, morality, and clarity, but they contribute diminishing returns to our understanding either of the dangers or of the opportunities of the future.

If we must wait until we understand ourselves, we aren't likely to get out of the nuclear age; indeed we may not get out of it whatever we do. But clearly one requirement is a less oppressive climate, and achieving this would seem to entail drastic re-education and measures on many fronts abroad and at home to give Americans a feeling of creativity in the discovery of a political equivalent that would also be a moral equivalent for war.

Finally, in the light of all these crescent dangers, the earlier article seems to me today too detached and somewhat complacent an essay. Since it was written, both intelligence and discontent would seem to have gained more importance in American life. Emerging from the sordid and frightening distraction provided by Senator McCarthy, though not by any means from all the legacies of his procedures and his view of the world, intellectuals regained some confidence. And in

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the last years of Eisenhower, despite the two defeats of Adlai Stevenson, men began to run for Congress and the Senate and to take part in political life who were as much at home in the world of ideas as their predecessors were in the court-house crowd or the Masonic Lodge of small town Republicanism. Indeed, the whole discussion of disarmament and foreign policy in the United States has become more open, more sophisticated, and more widespread in the last few years; preoccupations once confined to *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and a few other specialized or sectarian groups can now be shared with a far wider audience, inside as well as outside the Administration. The difficulty, as so often in history, is that events appear to outpace the rapid growth of understanding and of the political concepts and forms that might bring about a more creative domestic and foreign policy. The spirit of McCarthyism reflects long-standing discontents and bellicosities in America, for our society is one where men and groups are accustomed to mobility, to expansion, to progress and secular growth, and the Cold War now provides a wider stage for the drama of winning and losing, of growth and senescence.* The antibodies against McCarthyism are not hardy, and free debate concerning alternatives remains muted and constricted (compared with, for instance, Canada). But what makes the radical Right so ominous now is less its impact on civil liberties and domestic affairs, an impact that can be held in check in the give and take of poltics, than its potential power, in cooperation with mindless militancy in other countries, to jeopardize, at least in the Northern latitudes, the human enterprise itself. Political plagues become more devastating when a single plane or Polaris submarine can carry more death than all the bombs of World War II.

* Cf., for fuller discussion, Riesman and Michael Maccoby, "The American Crisis," in *The Liberal Papers,* edited by James Roosevelt. (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962), pp. 13-47.

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LONDON LETTER

In the cities of Bavaria or northern Italy or the Ruhr, in Milan, in Munich, in Cologne, the Americanization of life takes on pretty obvious forms. There are large glass buildings that have been snatched bodily, unscrupulously, from Park Avenue: smooth, identically dressed executives move briskly through the squares and the air-conditioned cafes: girls in the streets pause in front of large plate glass windows to try and catch sight of the reflection of some film star whose face and figure they have assumed. For the eye there are Coca-Cola advertisements, for the ear there is the blare from juke boxes: and away from the centres of animation, for miles around, town and countryside, those old Europeans entities, have been homogenised into a kind of meaningless suburbia constituted of blocks of flats, filling stations, villas, parking lots, car dumps, flyovers, in which the only difference worth discriminating is that between the new and the old, the glossy and the ramshackle.

To this picture, films, books and articles have by now habituated us: so that the very word "Americanization" has come to stand for and just for this kind of visual transformation. It therefore isn't surprising that the American influence over here, which is strong, should very largely not be identified, because it manifests inself in subtler forms. Of course it also manifests itself in crude forms: but it *also* manifests itself in subtle forms, and it's of them I should like to write.

There is a new preoccupation in English thinking, in English writing, in English criticism to-day. You find it in whatever you read or listen to, and it might be called a preoccupation with "the way we live to-day." For traditionally this country has been singularly unself-conscious, singularly unself-reflective; it has shown itself more or less indifferent to the richness or complexity of the social life it contains. Of course, there have always been certain vague generalized images of favored types and characters, invariably heavily overlaid with sentiment, which have enjoyed a wide circulation and which in times of national

ERRATUM: On page 268 of this article, the third sentence in the second paragraph should read: The tone which is not agreeable in "The Two Cultures," being excessively self-contented, became odious in "The Significance of C. P. Snow," as it dipped into repetitive abuse.—Eds.

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distress or excitement have been celebrated with almost religious fervor. And again there has been in this country a succession of exact, comprehensive, objective surveys of the physical condition of life of certain sections of the population; surveys which have been models of their kind but have always been intended for some practical, generally reformist, end. What has by and large been lacking is any sustained attempt, whether in the form of a literature or of an oral tradition, to acquaint people who live in one kind of way with the kinds of way in which other people live. This has been lacking because what has also been lacking is the kind of social curiosity that such an inquiry would be intended to satisfy. If anyone has any doubts about this, just consider the English theater, up to, say, ten years ago: and think of the reputation that plays acquired simply because they showed themselves utterly indifferent to the social realities they were supposed to be about. Or for that matter consider the English theater since ten years ago: and think of the quite erroneous reputation that some plays have acquired for being about these realities.

But, as I say, today this seems to be altering. Along the whole range from the serious to the pop, from the intellectual weeklies and the books reviewed at length in the Sunday papers to glossy magazines on the one hand and the cheap press on the other; from the conscientiously written play put on at a "little" theater to the cynically produced film that still manages to draw audiences from home and T.V., the new curiosity threatens to engulf everything. Hoggart, Sillitoe, MacInnes, Michael Young: Hunslet, Bethnal Green, Coronation Street, Dinlock, Stepney—these names have not merely entered our consciousness, but they have stayed on there, rather in the form of an imperative: Know Thyself. All over Britain the mind finds itself in the posture of a man, wandering aimlessly along the street, perhaps muttering to himself, who is suddenly brought up short by catching sight of himself in an unsuspected mirror.

Now it's an obvious thing to say that in this new awakening of self-interest, we can see the convergence of British attitudes upon the example of America. But this is only the beginning of the matter. For it isn't just in the fact of self-consciousness, it is also in the forms that this self-consciousness assumes, that we can see the influence of transatlantic models. Both on the Left and the Right this is observable—for the new curiosity goes in both these two directions.

On the Left the tendency has been to interpret the contemporary British scene in terms and phrases that were developed to meet the American situation and belong intrinsically, say, to the kind of social

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criticism that American radical periodicals have been carrying since the 1930's. Compare, for instance, a copy of the *New Left Review* of today with a copy of *Dissent* of yesterday, and one is immediately struck by the syntactical similarity. And not just syntactical either. The same vocabulary bears the same ideas, or at any rate the same underlying doctrine; in which the most obvious element is the total rejection of mass culture as something contaminated beyond redemption by its commercial origins, and alongside this there is a quasi-mystical reverence for the folk and the *raciné*.

On the Right the parallelism between the new British self-interest and its American counterpart goes deeper, and just for that reason is rather harder to convey. Fundamentally it relates to the particular social use or function to which the phenomenon is put. What, say, something like *Time-Life* has been teaching us over the years is that the constant exposure of fact can come to serve as a kind of social palliative, no matter how brutal or disturbing the fact may be in itself: and it now seems that there are editors, proprietors and publicists over here who have learnt the lesson. Society may be degraded, poor, unloved, unilluminated, but in the hands of professionals, of experts, of men who know their job, it can be so presented that the citizens of the society will thereby be reconciled to, rather than roused against, their lot. Schematically, we can see this process as occurring in three distinct phases.

First of all, the reader is lulled into indifference by the mere bulk of what is revealed to him. However shocking or disagreeable the facts may be in themselves, a certain security lies always in number for the simple reason that no one can be indignant against everything. Once enough 'revelations' have been made, the reformer in us all, the reformer in the most reforming of us all, becomes somehow poised or suspended between them, like the proverbial ass. In the old days priests and tyrants kept their peoples in submission by suppressing facts. Today their successors have as good—or perhaps better because more respectable—a way of achieving the same end: by publicising facts, provided only that there are enough of them.

Secondly, the very quantity of fact that led the reader into indifference leads him on from indifference to admiration. He begins to think that there must be something to a society that can be so rich, so versatile, so many-sided as to keep his curiosity endlessly supplied with new and diverse revelations. Poverty, crime, corruption, may be unlovely things in themselves, but produced in such profusion they elicit from the citizen of the self-conscious society the kind of awe that, for instance, Marx felt before the wonders of capitalist society.

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And finally from awe a sort of optimistic detachment. Increasingly familiarised with and flattered by the variety of his society, the reader tends less and less to identify himself with that particular part of the society to which he happens to belong. He feels himself in communion with every aspect of society—the millionaires, the drug addicts, the commuters, the homeless, the dockers, the writers—but in a way which so far from engendering sympathy somehow makes it seem superfluous. The rich man feels that he knows the tribulations of the poor, which therefore can't be as bad as all that: and the poor feel that nothing really separates them from the life of the rich, save the accident of money. Everyone is made to feel an interchangeable element in a single mobile society: in what in the editorial of the first number of the new *Sunday Times* color section, the latest and the most brazen attempt at this kind of pop sociology, is called the "one nation."

I don't have to say how deplorable I find the "Right" version of this new interest—which in itself is such an excellent and belated thing. Unfortunately, though, the "Left" version is really no better: in fact it could be argued that it is, if anything, something worse, for in a country which has been so pathetically self-ignorant, the diffusion of miscellaneous fact, even in the *Time-Life* style, might at least in the short run serve a useful function. But I think that there really are severe dangers, in the matter of opportunities that will be lost, if leftist social comment continues to be geared to a more "mass" form of society than the one that we actually have.

The other day I was taken by a friend of mine, a very young and extremely intelligent man of radical views who studies drama at a provincial university, to a production put on at the Hackney Trades Hall in some kind of loose association with Centre 42. The production was divided into two parts: the first dedicated to the history of trades unionism and the industrial struggle, illustrated with back-projection of nineteenth-century engravings and photographs, ballads, excerpts from contemporary commentators, and brief historical sketches, the second consisting of folk dancing and singing dug out of the resources of the local ethnic groups—some Greek dancers, a Spanish guitarist, an Indian singer and, the freshest touch of all, some young girls singing Israeli songs. In its total rejection of pop, in its addiction to grass roots, in its minimal concessions to the modern world, in its regression to a kind of sentimental veneration for proletarian life and its presentation of the social struggle as assuming much the same form in 1962 as it did in the days of Chartism and Engels, the whole event was a monument to the kind of leftist attitudes I've been describing.

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A postscript about the Snow-Leavis controversy. As the world now knows, on February the 28th F. R. Leavis delivered, in the sheltered atmosphere of the hall at Downing College Cambridge, to an audience officially limited to the undergraduate and graduate body of the College an attack upon Sir Charles Snow under the title "The Significance of C. P. Snow." In 1959, in the same university, though in a more public setting, C. P. Snow had taken on a larger target—the culture of "the entire West"—and had attacked it no less radically though more temperately than he himself was to be by Leavis. In "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution," Snow's case was that our culture is divided, not exhaustively but almost so, into two elements which he identified as "the scientific culture" and the culture of "the literary intellectuals"; each of these is somewhat defective in itself, one rather more than the other, but it is their isolation, their mutual exclusiveness, that is so dangerous to the cause of progress. Snow's lecture had a lively though mixed reception. Those who hate science or who cling to a rather narrow notion, endemic to the English tradition, of what are "humane studies," denounced Snow as a philistine. Scientists who felt either themselves or their subject to be despised or slighted, welcomed him as a champion. Many people committed to neither camp thought that the lecture might be useful, if only because it might encourage thinking to go further in a direction in which Snow himself had obviously stopped short.

But it cannot really be claimed that "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution" became the subject of a fruitful discussion. And for this the poverty of Snow's text was primarily to blame. In the first place, his characterization of the two cultures was obviously inadequate. The scientist and (to a greater extent) the literary intellectual, whom he conjured up for us as the two polar types of our culture, belong more to the unreality of the British theater than to the reality of British life. Secondly, Snow failed totally to make clear what he understood to be the true cultural value of science or to show, to the satisfaction either of the unconverted or the converted, why "education" in the modern age was necessarily incomplete without some scientific instruction. In this task he was not helped either by the systematic confusion he made throughout the lecture between science and technology or by the very unfortunate examples he gave of the sort of scientific subject that, in his opinion, an educated man might be expected to know about—the second law of thermodynamics, and the "human organization" necessary for running a button factory. Thirdly, the attack upon modern literature for being obscure in form and re-

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actionary in content seemed to spring from a very superficial conception of art, according to which the non-utilitarian or autonomous aspects of the subject get regarded as superficial adjuncts. Finally, Snow gave no unambiguous indication of what was the true ground of his interest in the cultural problem. What exactly was it that was threatened by the "Cultural divide?" Civilization; material progress; the cause of the West in the Cold War—all these appear momentarily in Snow's lecture as candidates for being the ultimate object of his concern. None of them is settled for unconditionally, nor did the lecturer indicate how in his historical imagination they are linked.

In most respects Leavis's lecture might be described as the mirror-image of Snow's. Whatever was confused in the original work remained so in the latter one, simply with the labels of approbation or disapprobation neatly reversed. The tone, which is not agreeable in "The Two the "Cultural divide?" Civilization; material progress; the cause of the Significance of C. P. Snow," as it dipped into repetitive abuse. It is therefore not surprising that apart from affirmations of loyalty and friendship made by supporters of one or other of the two protagonists—for neither could exactly be described as "a lone figure"—little or no serious discussion should have centred round the two rival texts, and that the interest of the controversy should have been found to reside largely in the way in which what could and should have been a serious issue has been totally obfuscated by a fog of personality and publicity. If, as is said, Sir Charles has been very wounded by the scurrilous note of Leavis' attack, this is sad. But then is it not all also symptomatic of the whole campaign, fought, one feels, with an eye fixed on well-situated audiences in places like Berkeley or Moscow, that the criticism that should have been found most devastating is the one where it is the reach of the voice, not the effectiveness of what it says, that is distinctive?

From the point of view of Leavis, "The Significance of C. P. Snow" might most charitably be described as a biographical curiosity. It certainly coincides with the low-water mark of someone who has been a formidable critic of literature and a very significant, often very beneficial, influence upon social criticism in general. All that really remains in this lecture of Leavis's old intellectual standards is a reiterated belief in the importance of argument, which only makes the absence of the thing itself more felt.

But in one important respect, which is linked with what I wrote about earlier on, Leavis fails not only himself but a large body of thought today that, knowingly or unknowingly, draws its sustenance from him

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and that is in his inability to sustain on the appropriate intellectual level his critique of what he calls Snow's "Neo-Wellsianism" or his belief in "jam." For it is probably Leavis—or at any rate that strange double figure Leavis-Lawrence—who more than anyone else is responsible for the particular version of anti-materialism that, as we have seen, is so prevalent amongst a young and articulate section of the British Left today. Accordingly, it would have been interesting if Leavis had given us a succinct statement of just what he thinks is wrong with the doctrine of jam—leaving it of course to others (for the problem does not arise for him) to fit such a belief into a framework of Socialism. Instead Leavis is evasive. It is, for instance, never quite clear whether he means by "jam" material advance or a concern for material advance. In other words, does Leavis think that the enemy of culture is a rising standard of living, or does he on the other hand think that it is the preoccupation with a rising standard of living that threatens culture? If he thinks the latter and not the former, with what right does he think that the standard of living will continue to rise if people do not continue to set great store by it? If, on the other hand, he thinks the former as well as the latter, what is his historical evidence for such a belief?

It may be said that Leavis has discussed these issues at length elsewhere. (It may also be said that Leavis expressly disavows in this lecture both the two views I have attributed to him; this is true, but it is also true that he implicitly subscribes to them). The fact remains that, by failing to give his own views the same serious heavy undivided attention that he bestows upon the least of Snow's pretensions, he lost the opportunity of raising a notable occasion from the level of advertisement to that of argument. As it stands, the Richmond Lecture carries with it unmistakably the flavor of a time of day so powerful, so suggestive, so evocative for many an English writer: a wasted afternoon in an old university.

Richard Wollheim

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John Henry Raleigh

THE "TRUTH"

I

There are two mysteries in human life, history and personality, and they are both studied and comprehended in two antithetical ways: either by the intuitive generalization or by a detailed study, either the forest at a glance or a tree by tree examination. The time-honored, everyday, pragmatic way of reading character is to do it at a glance. In Santayana's words:

> It is a mark of the connoisseur to be able to read character and habit and to divine at a glance all a creature's potentialities. The sort of penetration characterized the man with an eye for horse-flesh, the dog-fancier, and men and women of the world.

But the intuitive glance of the connoisseur cannot tell the whole story, any more than the telling historical generalization can comprehend the all of an historical situation. Personality is doubly mystifying because, unlike history, it is a consciousness itself and more often than not a dishonest one. Santayana continues:

> If Rousseau, for instance, after writing those Confessions in which candor and ignorance of self are equally conspicuous, had heard some intelligent friend, like Hume, draw up in a few words an account of this author's true and contemptible character, he would have been loud in protestations that no such ignoble characteristics existed in his eloquent consciousness.

No one has ever been able to tell the truth about himself. Practically all human lives have too much that is trivial and much that is too mean to bear telling by their perpetrator. Goethe said he could not bear to write his own autobiography, and he was right. St. Augustine's treatment of his concubine, by whom he had a son, was shabby. John Stuart Mill's treatment of his mother and sisters, in the affair of Mrs. Taylor, was deplorable, but neither of those "Saints"—the Saint of the Catholic Church and the "Saint of Rationalism"— could

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bring those things out into the open in their respective autobiographies. Even that great "truth-teller" Rousseau who opens the *Confessions* with, "I am commencing an undertaking, hitherto without precedent, and which will never find an imitator. I desire to set before my fellows the likeness of a man in all the truth of nature, and that man myself," could not bring himself to mention the four, or possibly five, children that he had by Thérèse le Vasseur. These four or five bits of humanity simply disappear from history, probably into a foundling home, but the memory of them darkened his last years, perhaps to the point of insanity. They are not even mentioned in the *Confessions.* The first irony then of reconstructing a personality is that more often than not the subject himself is the most unreliable witness, not only about the intangibles such as his own nature, but about the facts themselves.

Biography fares better, but not too much better. The first complete and seminal "character" in our civilization is Socrates. But he is known chiefly through the "Apology," which may well be an idealization. The sketches of Aristophanes, where Socrates is a comic butt, and of Xenophon, where he is presented as a rather prosaic person, are both quite dissimilar from the great figure of Plato's imagination. Again in the character sketch by Diogenes Laertius (circa A.D. 200), which drew upon past biographies of Socrates, all of which have disappeared, Socrates emerges as a kind of crank, funny but no teacher of mankind. It is true that the only known fact about Socrates was the fact that he was put to death by the state in 399 B.C. Everything else is conjecture. The truth of Socrates is lost in antiquity, but even when the record of an individual is more or less extensive, the truth is still elusive. Ancient biography, as in Plutarch, tended to be honest but incomplete for anyone who has read Boswell, while modern biography—meaning post-Boswellian biography—tends to be up through the nineteenth century complete in most respects but dishonest, or better, secretive about certain areas. Boswell's Johnson is the first monumental biography in our civilization, but while this is an extensive treatment of a personality, it is not a complete one. Most of Johnson's youth is obscure; his relationship to his wife, Hetty, is shrouded; whole aspects of his being do not appear. Lockhart's Scott and Forster's Dickens are admitted whitewashes. Morley's Gladstone is monumental but treats its subject, understandably, as if it were in fact a monument.

Even when great public figures, like Washington or Lincoln, are examined exhaustively, we still do not know what they looked like

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to their respective valets. Generally speaking, it has remained for the twentieth century to "tell all."

I'll leave aside the question whether it would not be in fact better to leave certain things obscure and accord the dead the privacy that is usually accorded the living, and go on to say that no other century has had the passion for the valet's-eye-view as has the twentieth. This is both good and bad. On its bad side it is merely a passion for gossip and the salacious detail. Less harmfully, this passion for details is also a manifestation of the general impulse of the "you-are-there" spirit that likewise permeates the age in all media of communication from television to wide-screen movies to "The Day That . . ." series of popular histories. What did Christ have for breakfast on the day of the Crucifixion, what were the last words of the Captain of the Titanic, what did Joyce and Nora do on their first evening together? All these burning issues are an inexhaustible meat supply for this voracious and bottomless maw, and the practice itself is quite harmless. Aristotle said that man was a knowledge-acquiring animal, and, literally, anything is relevant.

What is good about the passion for the whole truth, the passion that produced Ellman's Joyce and Schorer's Lewis,* is that it represents the culmination of the one positive element in Western culture of the past century, that is, a drive toward truth-telling. If the modern world wants to bury itself under platitudes, clichés, lies, false beliefs, anachronisms, it also has a passion for the truth, at any cost. There are four things that people have habitually lied about: war, money, sex, and themselves. But after Tolstoy and after the literature, not to mention the experience, of World War I, war will never again be glorious and purposeful, nor after Marx will money be so mysterious, nor after Freud, not to mention Joyce and Lawrence, will sex be so hidden. For it was precisely the point of both Marx and Freud that our "thinking" about money and sex was a tissue of lies or euphemisms, conscious or unconscious. Likewise Lawrence and Joyce "suffered" for the truth. The amount of resistance by society to the truth can be gauged by the difficulties undergone by Marx, Freud, Joyce, and Lawrence. But if war, money, and sex can now be talked about with some degree of honesty, people will still lie about themselves. And thus the second irony about reading character is that only a

* SINCLAIR LEWIS: An American Life. By Mark Schorer. McGraw-Hill. $10.00.

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stranger, unbiased, uncommitted, and unconstrained, can approximate the truth about another character.

But there is still a third and final irony residing in the fact that even when all the facts are known, even when there are no constraints or prohibitions in the telling, the character under consideration instead of becoming clearer, as the details about him pile up, becomes more mysterious and fluid, as the countless acts and attitudes of which his life is made multiply, complicate, clash, and altogether defy any easy generalization. Santayana's intuitive glance would have told the bystander that Lewis was a mess, but what a very special and complicated and unique mess he was can only be appreciated by reading these 814 pages. And the "mess" has always the tendency to turn into a mystery, for this total resurrection of Lewis negates all easy generalizations about him. No life, much less Lewis's, would bear such scrutiny without becoming both ambiguous and disreputable. The only thing this biography proves with certitude is the incontestability of the old Italian saying: "Someday the truth will be known, and it will be sad." As for Lewis, he was both everything and nothing.

II

The first thing that one notices about the character of Sinclair Lewis is a basic antithesis (one term of which contains another whole series of antitheses). On the one hand there was a nothingness about him. This is the ground theme, the barren core, the empty heart of his life. It is announced in the opening sentence: "He was a queer boy, always an outsider, lonely;" and sustained to the awful end when, as an Italian doctor prophesied, he would not just die, he would "simply go down a hole." But there is a constant counterpoint which makes up almost the entire substance of this great biography and terrible story and which tells, in relentless detail, a story of considerable complexity of character and frenzy of activity, of innumerable atoms jangling around the void. For if there was something unhuman or dishuman about him, he was at the same time all too human, as the saying goes: considerable human complexity and contradiction enveloping a final inner emptiness. In fact the only analogy that I can think of to suggest his "character" is—insofar as I can understand the conception—that of the atom: a mad, confusing, dance of electricity which is finally quite unsubstantial. The image of electricity in describing him is almost irresistible, for it is woven into the book. People who saw him in action instinctively seized upon it, and the startlingly red hair and the startlingly blue eyes made it duly ir-

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resistible: "He had a head of unmanageable red hair and a freckled face and a pair of remarkable blue eyes, the pupils of which darted with light." "He was never still, his hair flowed, his blue eyes blazed, his long, sensitive hands gesticulated." Lewis himself seemed to think of the electrical state as a kind of beatitude, and he dealt it out to his most fulfilled and creative hero, Martin Arrowsmith. When Arrowsmith is finally by himself, devoted solely to his research, "He hurled out hypotheses like sparks," and "always he hummed." So too Professor Schorer has embedded this basic metaphor into the impressionistically written parts of the book: "He seldom sat, but often slouched, long thin shanks folding and unfolding, hands always plucking at his face—nose, ears, cheek, chin—much jumping up, prancing, slouching again, smoking, smoking." Throughout the book Lewis continually "darts" and "spins." To this must be added the gruesome irony that his skin disease was probably augmented, and a permanent and malevolently red scar was imprinted upon his face, by X-ray treatments, at one time an ignorantly barbaric method of treating acne.

As for the dance of the atoms, first, it was characterized by contradictions of character, a maniacal range of interests, and a restless, haunted rootlessness. Travel with him was an obsession, possessed as he was by the "fallacy of elsewhere." Afraid of planes, although very interested in aviation, compulsive about trains—like Freud he had to be at the station at least an hour beforehand—his was the province of the automobile and the steamship, both of which were invented, it seems, for the benefit of Sinclair Lewis. Without them his life would have been impossible. Fords, Cadillacs, a final black Studebaker, which he owned in the last black days in Italy, and trans-Atlantic liners, carried this self-styled lover of Thoreau all over the surface of the United States, the Atlantic Ocean and most of Europe, with an extensive side-trip to the Caribbean, for research on *Arrowsmith*. He once attempted an extended tour on foot, a camping trip into Canada, but turned back before the planned journey was completed. But by whatever means he traveled, he had hardly ever pitched camp before he was beginning either to break it up or planning to break it up. Neither was he ever very stable as to where he proposed to go next. His life was the history of changed plans.

His range of interests was gargantuan, irrational, and, as usual, obsessive. They often bordered on genuine knowledge, but never actually constituted knowledge itself. "He does not know what knowledge is," said Dorothy Thompson. Information was his real interest, and the reference book was his favorite book (he had a whole library of them).

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"Nihil humanum mihi alienum est," he wrote in his diary in the winter of 1907 as he set out by steamer for Panama. But it was only information that he recorded, long Whitmanesque catalogues, all about fact and little about character; what things looked like, not what they meant; data rather than ideas. Later on as a novelist, he was a fact-gatherer, a forerunner, as Professor Schorer points out, of the modern sociologist who assiduously studies the current scene in the hope that if he can only gather *all* the facts he will find the answer to it all. Most of Lewis' novels were conceived as compendiums of sociological fact.

But irrespective of novels his craving for information was inexhaustible. Upon arrival in any American city, he immediately called the local newspaper: "This is Red Lewis, I'm here." He would then tour the local churches, for he was an indefatigable student of church architecture; also he always assiduously read the newspaper accounts of all the sermons, another favorite interest. (When gathering information for *Elmer Gantry,* he consorted with ministers constantly and actually preached some sermons himself.) Religion, real estate, feminism, medicine, and so on—each of his novels is always about something. He was likewise interested in aviation, automobiles, ships, hotels, labor, Negroes, the stage, teaching, cats, chess, philanthropy, houses, and so on. He even had an interest in toy soldiers and urged John Hersey to go into the business.

His surface character was equally widespread and chaotic right from the start. The queer lonely boy was "profoundly sentimental" and "not without a smothered sweetness;" but he could be insolent and he was given to tantrums. He was peculiarly and repeatedly gullible, always the butt of crude, sometimes cloacal, jokes; and he had only one friend. He was "almost endearingly incompetent." In his Oberlin days he was said to be trigger-tempered, repulsive to girls, "caustic," "sarcastic," a pariah; at this same time he himself was intensely religious, engaged constantly in Y.M.C.A. activities, and was committing to memory the Sermon on the Mount. At Yale he was a pariah known as "God-Forbid" (the meaning of the epithet is obscure): again the outsider. He was always picking up nicknames, a sure sign that one is either very popular (not the case here), or a figure of fun.

As his life went on the complexities and contradictions only increased as the fissures in his character deepened: a physical coward, a mimic of genius, possessed of a prodigious memory—he could quote Donne's "Canonization" or the trial scene from *Pickwick* verbatim—a pacifist, a clever and experienced publicist; hair-triggered, charming

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(when he wished); philanderer, drunkard, lecturer; bellicose, lonely, courageous, generous, self-destructive, cruel; a dandy, a toady (after repeatedly saying to Lord Beaverbrook during a long conversation, "What do you think, Max?" Beaverbrook finally turned on him, "What do you think, Sinc?"), a democrat, a village atheist, a patriot, an expatriate; a "nuisance" drunk who was obsessed with orderliness; all the time living in "a frenzy . . . half melancholy," his last true friend and companion being the mother of his last mistress, who had since married someone else. Professor Schorer sums it all up near the end of the book:

Consider him at any level of conduct—his domestic habits, his social behavior, his character, his thought, his art—always there is the same extraordinary contradiction. Sloppy and compulsively tidy, absurdly gregarious and lonely, quick in enthusiasms and swiftly bored, extravagant and parsimonious, a dude and a bumpkin, a wit and a bore, given to extremities of gaiety and gloom, equally possessed of a talent for the most intensive concentration and for the maddest dishevelment of energies; sweet of temper and virulent, tolerant and abruptly intolerant, generous and selfish, kind and cruel, a great patron and a small tyrant, disliking women even when he thought he most loved them, profane and a puritan, libertine and prude, plagued by self-doubt as he was eaten by arrogance; rebel and conservative, polemicist and escapist, respectful of intellect and suspicious of intellectual pursuits, loving novelty and hating experiment, pathetically trusting in "culture" and narrowly deriding "art"; cosmopolitan and chauvinist, sentimentalist and satirist, romanticist and realist, blessed—or damned—with an extraordinary verbal skill and no style; Carol Kennicott and Doc, her husband; Paul Riesling and George F. Babbitt; Harry Lewis and Dr. E. J. Lewis or Dr. Claude B. Lewis; Harry Lewis and even Fred the miller, who never left home.

But underneath was always the void, "I'm just like this dog, all I want is affection," he said to Leonard Bacon as he patted Bacon's dog. "'He was terribly afraid to be alone,'" presumably, because when he was there was no one there. He had no capacity for tenderness and said of himself, "I exist mostly above the neck." Dorothy Thompson who knew him best and loved him best, against all reason and experience, declared: "You aren't a husband or a lover or a father but a person of expression, a man of words." An acute stranger, the then Edna Louise Larson, who took his course in creative writing at Wisconsin, observed that he was "a cold rather than a warm personality," and that there was a "seeming emptiness in him." "Who then, was Sinclair Lewis? Did he know himself who he was? Or what he stood for?" Even at the height of his fame, flushed with the success

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of *Babbitt,* Ludwig Lewisohn could speak of his triumphant face as being composed of "glittering surfaces." At the end, living in his garish villa in Florence, attended only by the shadowy, and apparently dubious, Alexander Manson, his last "secretary," drinking himself to death in solitary bouts, taking walks alone only on the shadow side of the house, he exclaimed "Oh God, no man has ever been so miserable!" One has to go back to Swift to find an equivalence to this, and, worse, he had not a jot of Swift's authentic greatness. For after more than sixty years of talking, writing, traveling, lecturing, loving, hating, whoring, drinking, ranting, it had all added up, *for him anyway,* to: zero. In America, where life follows art, organic Americans are always acting out the roles prescribed for them by fictional Americans, and Lewis finally turned into the John Marcher of Henry James's *The Beast in the Jungle.* Just as May Bartram had offered to save Marcher, so had Dorothy Thompson tried to save Lewis. Both women—or men really—fail. Marcher finally realizes that May Bartram should have been his fate and in fact "was what he had missed." It is difficult to imagine that Lewis would ever have thought this of "the Talking Woman" of his conception, but he certainly must finally have come, through the haze of alcohol, to Marcher's realization: "The fate he had been marked for he had met with a vengeance—he had emptied the cup to the lees, he had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened." According to those who were close to him, Lewis had no real vanity, however angrily proud he could be, and was thus deprived of that last great narcotic, self-deception. He did not know what he was and therefore nothing had ever really happened to him; and the knowledge evidently drove him to his death.

There are a host of other people in the book, the whole literary world of early twentieth-century America and England, but out of these scores of characters only three count: Dr. E. J. Lewis, the father, Dr. Claude Lewis, the brother, and the wonderful Dorothy Thompson, the wife. And Lewis is the flowing water to the bleak rocks of his father and brother and the sturdy green tree of Dorothy Thompson. The father and the brother were just like the father and the brother of George Eliot: upright, capable, competent, successful, both knowing who they were and what they wanted, always disapproving of the red-haired maverick. But George Eliot was a woman and having the approval and support of another man, G. E. Lewes, could learn to live with the permanent disapproval of her father and her brother, but Lewis was a man and could not. Lewis could never please his father, but he tried with Claude his brother,

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like the father a doctor. In 1947 he said, "for sixty years I have tried to impress my brother Claude," and without success. The father was an even more implacable monolith who had an aswer to all of life's questions except one, namely, how such a "bundle of nerves," his son, could bring in so much money. On that great occasion, a young writer's first significant publication, Dr. E. J. Lewis wrote to his exultant son, whose eight-part serial *The City Shadow* had appeared in *Nautilus* in 1909-1910:

> The sentiment of the magazine is decidedly bum but it is all right when they pay you good money. They are evidently quite bright people but evidently neurotics chasing off a new or old track. . . . That Nautilus is certainly the greatest amount of dish-water in one package that I have seen for a long time.

And this was the man to whom all his life Lewis was the small and erring boy whose life-long law was *Hoc pater meus dixit.*

The sanest and warmest people in the book are two women: Dorothy Thompson and Edith Wharton. Edith Wharton is not a major character in the biography nor was she an intimate of Lewis, but her letters to him about his work stand out for their warmth, and what can only be called "motherly" encouragement. Even from afar she must have sensed what he needed.

It is impossible to praise Dorothy Thompson too highly. Handsome, brilliant, with a rock-like integrity, and enough charity to save the human race, she leads one only to say that if she could not save him, no one could. But all gifted people are double-edged in their effect, and it was perhaps precisely because she was so intelligent and so decent that he got so he could not stand her. One of the jokes about Dorothy Thompson, after the breakup of her marriage to Lewis, went like this: it is a dialogue, in the morning, in the Lewis apartment; Lewis, "It's a nice day"; Mrs. Lewis, "No, it is not, and I'll tell you why . . ." At this point, so the story goes, he put on his hat and left, she at the beginning of a long speech. But surely, however voluble and however concerned with "The Situation" —Lewis once said that if he ever got a divorce he would name Hitler as the corespondent—she was a wise person with a sense of what was what and what went together and what did not, possessed of a genuine sense of history by which she could look before and after. She was every bit as heroic as Lewis was not. But all this was, I suppose, the final blow for Lewis, to marry someone who was both strong and sane, to have to try to adjust his disastrous personality

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and his essential ignorance to real character and considerable learning. In any event she gave him his greatest moments: a brief span of personal happiness and a truly great offer of forgiveness. Lewis is at his very best in his courtship of her; he had considerable and real charm, and she brought it all out. Twice during the courtship they disappear from the documents, just drop out of sight, together. These must have been his moments of happiness.

When Lewis' last mistress married, Lewis wrote her and described their relationship as "the one distinguished event in my life." As usual, about anything concerning himself, he was wrong. The "one distinguished event in his life" was when Dorothy Thompson wrote to her wayward husband, now separated from her:

> But the very basis of my relationship to you is that I cannot cherish any grudge or feel even normal resentment against you that endures, or that changes my feelings. "That is the way he is," is the only answer I can find. . . .

This from the woman who said that during their marriage when he came to her in the night drunk and demanding he exuded an odor—"she paused in the recollection as she sought for the exact analogy—that was like rotting weeds."

But he could not perceive the authentic greatness of her statement, for he was, and always remained, incredibly naïve. And if he was Henry James's John Marcher, he was also Harold Frederic's Theron Ware: to presume upon the feelings and relations of other people; to invent, and act upon, a human situation that does not exist; to be sort of messily virtuous because of an unrecognized sexual frustration; to be told finally, those grimmest of admonitions, "Things are not what you think," and "Mind your own business." Frances Perkins, who like Edith Wharton and Dorothy Thompson (and like Sister Soulsby in *The Damnation*), saw what he needed, i.e., protection, describes a Ware-esque experience of Lewis in his early days in New York. On the Staten Island Ferry—at this period he was still presumably virginal himself—he spotted some pretty young girls and decided that he would set himself up as their "protector;" he hovered around the girls, and when they got off the ferry took them by the arm over to the elevated railway:

> Then one of the girls turned and said to me, "What are you doing to us? What have you got against us anyway?" Sinclair then tried to explain to her the horrible danger she was running there. She looked at him and said, "What are you doing? I have been on the turf since

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I was fifteen. You get along now and don't ruin my night's business."

After such history, what forgiveness?

III

If Lewis was cast in the role of John Marcher—Theron Ware, Professor Schorer plays two other James characters: the respective protagonists of *The Aspern Papers,* the demanding pursuit down the avenues of the past in search of a character, and *The Figure in the Carpet,* the attempt to unravel the mystery and find the meaning.

There would be many ways of telling this story. One could "psychologize" Lewis out of existence ("With that face and that father, how could he have been saved?"). Or one could stand back in horror and moralize over the whole mess. Or one could encase it in some easy generalities about the "fate of the American writer." Or, worst of all, one could try to be "objective" and "neutral." It is one of the many virtues of this biography that it does none of these things. It has to be read to be appreciated, but it can be said that it is a triumph not only of scholarship but of tone and tact as well. Just the right distance from Lewis is established at the start and held to the end by a perspective that is pervasively but not heavily ironic and that can turn with ease, and without break, to either comedy or tragedy but that never loses sight of the fact that Lewis, at his very worst, was still a human being.

The form is both copious and severe, innumerable details held together in a simple over-all structure. Lewis' life had a conveniently disastrous symmetry: an over-all curve from an unhappy childhood to a miserable death and within this arching pattern there is a kind of muted ugly duckling story about the "hick" from the Midwest who wins fame and fortune. The life by itself has then a very basic and primitive appeal, the human fascination with tragedy and with the tale of the ugly duckling. Within this over-all frame two things are going on. First, and most obvious, is the year-by-year, month-by-month, week-by-week, day-by-day, sometimes hour-by-hour account of his life. Secondly, Lewis, in the first part of the book, gradually emerges into the forefront of American life and in the last part gradually disappears from it. By "emerging to the forefront" I do not mean simply that he became famous—for he became famous with *Main Street* and remained so—but that he had a genuine relevance to his culture: he told it something about itself, about the existence of Main Streets and Babbitts. If he finally falsified both images in his

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complete novelistic treatment of them, at least his basic insight was honest and clear. But the society itself was moving ahead faster than he. In the world of the twenties, he was already an anachronism. Although living in New York in the twenties he had no discernible connections with that vital and complex literary hive, which was buzzing with Freud, Marx, Bergson, Nietzsche, the French Impressionists, and the new European music, to all of which Lewis was indifferent, but which were precisely the forces that were to influence serious American culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Intellectually, as Professor Schorer suggests, Lewis had a link to Veblen, but he remained essentially the Middle-Western village atheist, like Pound. Within the arch of doom there are two striking metaphors, which are provided, appropriately enough, by some of the actors in the drama itself, and which define the poles between which Lewis' life was suspended. Significantly, they are provided by two priests and one doctor, the respective ministers of the soul and the body. The first basic metaphor is that of the stars. Standing in a dingy Broadway alley by a theater in which a play backed and directed by Lewis had resoundingly failed, Father Edward F. Murphy observed:

> I looked up at the stars on Broadway, all the bigger and brighter to me for the dreary wall of an alley which served as a kind of telescope, and hoped he would look up too. But he did not.

Later, just before the end, in what proved to be a completely unsuccessful attempt to get to "know" the Italians, Lewis invited a Father Martinelli to dine with him. Silent, awkward, the diners soon parted but not before Father Martinelli observed, standing in the loggia of Lewis' mansion, "To the left appeared the city lights; above the stars." The other basic metaphor is that black "hole" prophesied by Doctor Lapiccirella. Thus was Lewis always suspended between the stars he would not look at and the obscure hole into which he finally descended. This star-hole metaphor would be perhaps too obvious in a novel, but life is often more platitudinous than art. What is striking is that three people, relative strangers, should have instinctively seized upon it.

There are two basic philosophical assumptions underlying this narrative. The over-all form is an argument for free will, or better, for the terrible authenticity of the old adage, "Character is fate." In an age given to historical, sociological, and psychological determinism, the biography comes as a salutary reminder that the old theological conundrum about fate and free will have never been solved or re-

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solved, but has been translated from theological terms to historical or sociological or psychological terms; and that the arguments for free will, even after a hundred and fifty years of determinism, are still persuasive, if not conclusive. I should hasten to add that the author scrupulously avoids—with one exception—any such speculations. I am talking rather about one reader's reactions to the method of narration. A thread of destiny runs through it all, but the destiny is in Lewis' character. Like Oedipus, he is both cursed by forces over which he has no real control and is at the same time responsible for what happens to him. But worse, Oedipus finds he has at least *done* something, while Lewis finds, only, zero, trapped, as he was, by himself. He never even had the illusion of freedom. Again it's all in James, in Strether's declaration and admonition in the garden in *The Ambassadors*:

> The affair—I mean the affair of life—couldn't, no doubt, have been different for me; for it's, at the best, a tin mould, either fluted or embossed, with ornamental excrecences, or else smooth and dreadfully plain, into which a helpless jelly, our consciousness, is poured—so that one "takes" the form, as the great cook says, and is more or less compactly held by it; one lives in fine, as one can. Still, one has the illusion of freedom; therefore don't be, like me, without the memory of that illusion.

The only time the web of destiny for Lewis is broken is when Professor Schorer speculates that perhaps he would have been different if he had not gone to Yale. This, it seems to me, is placing an undue and unearned burden on Yale, all its sins on its snobbish old head. Further, he could have done worse. He could have gone to Princeton, at that time, as the saying went, "the Southern University furthest North," and "the Lepidus of the Triumvirate." It is precisely one of the signal differences between this biography and Ellman's great biography of Joyce that Joyce inhabits an "open" universe. It wouldn't be hard to imagine him becoming, as Bloom does in a revery, the Pope himself. If it was Joyce's fate to write, it was in his character to be anything. But Lewis inhabited a "closed" universe: minute by minute, inching, year by year, galloping, to his own doom. Likewise this is one of the real differences between Joyce's fictional world and Lewis'. Joyce's world despite the "nightmare of history," is "open" and Bloom, as cursed in his way as Lewis was in his, escapes. But Lewis' characters usually—Arrowsmith and some others excepted—are either trapped or driven. It is for this reason that in the later

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novels, they lose their humanity—as did Lewis himself—just as Joyce's characters never do.

A corollary to the demonstration of "character is fate," and again not superimposed by the author but inherent in the materials, is a "macrocosm-microcosm" structure. Almost everything Lewis did is a miniature illustration of his whole life. This is true, in a general sense, of everybody although usually people of Lewis' complexity and talent periodically break through their own pattern. But Lewis' life is an illustration of Blake's parable that eternity is in a grain of sand, and thus the whole biography is made up of microcosmic summations of his whole fate. He was always doing something wrong, different, and characteristic. At what he regarded as the climactic moment of his life, the acceptance of the Nobel Prize, he characteristically made a mistake, slight, to be sure, but nevertheless showing him still to be the "endearingly incompetent boy." As Lewis descended down the red carpet to King Gustav to receive the award, he stopped too far from the King and bowed unnecessarily low. The King had to motion him forward. And when he went fishing with Claude, he lost two complete trolling spoons.

IV

But it is all *de te fabula* after all. If Lewis is a series of antitheses encircling a void, he is also a kind of exaggerated Everyman, suspended between the bright stars and the dark hole. If he remains an electronic mystery, he is also like a series of receding mirrors, which, as we peer into them, give us back only a distorted picture of ourselves. Mankind is a mystery, but every man is representative of mankind and every man is an Everyman, including Lewis. Here in Lewis' story are all the basic male fears and loss fantasies: loss of potency, loss of creativity, loss of wives, mistresses, friends, loss of roots, loss of identity, all acted out literally. It is as if Lewis had been chosen to be the scapegoat for the modern male, and the reading of this magnificent biography is genuinely cathartic—pity for the man, fear because he is a man like ourselves. Likewise every man has tucked away in him somewhere some little pocket of emptiness. Lewis' pocket happened to turn out to be a chasm. Americans always like to think that what happens to them happens because they are Americans. But the burden of being an American is minuscule in comparison with the burden of being a human being. That Lewis was totally unequal to the task is only a reminder that no one bears that burden with entire honor.

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BOOKS

ALEXANDER HERZEN

ALEXANDER HERZEN AND THE BIRTH OF RUSSIAN SOCIALISM, 1812-1855. By Martin Malia. Harvard University Press. $10.00.

Alexander Herzen is certainly the most sympathetic and interesting figure among the leaders of Russian radicalism in the early nineteenth century, and the only one whose writings have more than a local or historical interest in connection with the revolutionary movement. Belinsky's literary criticism makes no important contribution to its field, though his work had undeniable importance in stimulating concern with intellectual and cultural problems in Russia; nor do Bakunin's tirades and dialectical sleights of hand give us any new insights into anything except the vagaries of his temperament. And the same is true of the next succeeding generation of the Russian radicals of the 'sixties. Their leaders Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were incredibly hard-working publicists who turned out an immense amount of copy (including poetry and novels); but nothing that they wrote on a vast variety of subjects transcends in value the propaganda limits of their time and place. Herzen is the only true radical whose work is entitled to a place alongside that of the great nineteenth-century Russian novelists. And his most important book, the autobiography *My Past and Thoughts,* is perhaps the greatest work of its kind published anywhere in the nineteenth century, ranking with Rousseau's *Confessions* and Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* as both the picture of a life and a time.

In view of Herzen's importance, and the growing interest in Russian culture in general, the appearance of Professor Martin Malia's solid, penetrating and extremely thoughtful book on Herzen can only be welcomed with pleasure. There is a vast amount of literature on Herzen in Russian and one very good book in French; but the only previous work in English was E. H. Carr's *The Romantic Exiles*—primarily a depiction of the romantic imbroglios of Herzen's private life in exile, which only lightly sketches in the intellectual and political background. It is all the more to be regretted that Professor Malia did not give us a full-length study of Herzen, but chose to cut off his account with 1855 (actually he ends in 1848, and fills in the rest of the period

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in one concluding chapter). Professor Malia, as his title indicates, is interested in the birth of "Russian Socialism" of which Herzen was the progenitor; and he terminates his book at the point where Herzen's basic ideas on this issue were essentially hammered out.

Nonetheless, nothing can give us more insight into the tragic antinomies of Russian culture than Herzen's conflict with the radicals of the next generation, as reflected in parts of *My Past and Thoughts* and in later writings like *Letters to an Old Comrade* (Bakunin). This conflict forms the background for such a work as Dostoevsky's *The Devils,* which was inspired by exactly the same events—the Nechaev conspiracy—as *Letters to an Old Comrade;* and Professor Malia would have performed a great service by undertaking as dense an account of Herzen's intellectual evolution in his later years as he does of the earlier. However that may be, one certainly cannot complain of the quality of the fare offered in the period that Professor Malia has chosen to cover. He is admirably versed not only in the Russian material, but also in the early history of Socialism, the rise of nationalism, and, what is rarer, in the speculative intricacies of German idealism. He writes vigorously and well, and sometimes with genuine eloquence. His book is certainly one of the fullest and most reliable pictures available in English of Russian cultural history during the crucial first half of the nineteenth century.

The intellectual evolution of Herzen, with some slight variations, is essentially that of the whole generation of the 'forties in Russia. Born the illegitimate son of a wealthy Russian aristocrat, Herzen was nourished on the dramas of Schiller, with their pathos of freedom, and on the cry for liberty that rings out in some of the poetry of Pushkin as well as in that of the Decembrists who unsuccessfully tried to wrest a constitution from Nicholas I when he ascended the throne in 1825. Herzen and his friend Nicholas Ogarev swore their famous oath on the Sparrow Hills outside Moscow in 1827 or 1828, when they were still in their early teens; they pledged to dedicate their lives to fighting tyranny and to sacrifice their existence for the good of mankind. All this was very juvenile, romantic, *exalté;* but they remained true to their word, and this adolescent oath turned out to be a crucial moment in Russian history.

At Moscow University, then a little oasis of light and learning in the midst of the general desolation, Herzen imbibed the prevalent Schellingian idealism smuggled in by professors in the faculty of science. Even at this early period, however, Herzen was the center of a circle interested in the new French Socialism of Saint-Simon and his school. Herzen's socio-political interests were temporarily submerged by a period

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of exile, and an ensuing preoccupation with religious mysticism; but he returned to such problems under the influence of George Sand and Pierre Leroux, whose own Socialism was strongly tinged with mystical and religious ideas. The early 'forties brought him into contact with Hegel, and he thrashed out his final position by prolonged debates with two groups—on the one hand the nationalistic Moscow Slavophils, on the other the more liberal Westerners. Herzen personally had a foot in both camps, though his best friends were among the second group; and he eventually broke off relations with the Slavophils because, in the last analysis, they still supported autocracy and orthodoxy despite their moderately liberal desire for such Western inventions as freedom of speech, press and thought.

Herzen, however, took from the Slavophils the idea that the Russian peasant commune, with its completely democratic administration by a village council or *mir,* and its periodic redistribution of land, realized the ideals toward which European society was aspiring in such imaginary Utopias as the Fourierist phalanstery. His debates with the Westerners, who refused to go along either with his atheism or his idealization of the people, made him aware of the internal hindrances in European culture itself—as reflected by its defenders and admirers in Russia—barring the way to the realization of the brave new world of integral freedom that he desired. One of the most original aspects of Professor Malia's book, from the purely historical point of view, is his demonstration of the effect that Herzen's conflict with the Westerners had on shaping his predisposition to believe that European culture was incapable of sloughing off its centuries-old involvement with bourgeois individualism, private property and a centralized state. By the time he came to Europe in 1847 this conviction had already begun to harden; and the failure of the revolutions of 1848 simply confirmed what he already felt. Out of this concatenation emerged Herzen's Messianic and nationalistic "Russian Socialism," which counted on Russia and the peasant commune, led by the enlightened members of the radical gentry, to show the world the way to the Socialist Utopia of the future. It was this "Russian Socialism" that became the ideology of Russian Populism up through the rise of Marxism in 1880.

Malia is not content merely with impressively unrolling the panorama of these events as cultural history; he also attempts to "explain" them in terms of an elaborate employment of what he calls "social psychology." He links his method to that of the Left Hegelians, Karl Mannheim, Max Scheler and the Neo-Hegelian heretical Georg Lukacs of the early 'twenties; but despite this formidable array of authorities,

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the basic idea is very simple and more psychological than social. "It has been the major thesis of this book," he writes, "that the democratic ideal arose in Russia, not by direct reflection on the plight of the masses, but through the introspection of relatively privileged individuals who, out of frustration, generalized from a sense of their own dignity to the ideal of the dignity of all men." Nor is this type of explanation used only to cover the Russian situation. For Professor Malia treats *all* the major intellectual movements with which he deals—German Idealism, French Utopian Socialism, and the appropriation and assimilation of both in Russia—as essentially such "ideologies of compensation," which can best be understood in the light of the frustrations they express and whose objective value is approximately nil. It is the psychological dynamism of this frustration, he argues, which accounts for the maximalism, intransigence and totally Utopian impracticality of Russian radicalism.

Certainly there is a good deal of truth in this point of view, which seems primarily to derive from Karl Mannheim; but Professor Malia applies it with a rigor, a logic and a relentless consistency that narrows his perspective to a point where it becomes distorting. In the first place, it leads him to what, in my opinion, is a perfectly false picture of the kind of human being Herzen really was. Since everything has to spring from the frustrations of his "ego," poor Herzen is turned into a monster whose every action is dictated by vanity, self-seeking and a need for power or "recognition" (whatever that really means). Professor Malia never seems to have asked himself why anyone should "generalize" his own need for dignity into a universal ideal, and then devote his life to attaining this kind of "generalization." Is there not some essential difference in human quality between those who "generalize" and those who do not, and is it permissible to portray the former as if no such difference exists? Herzen is hardly ever allowed a moment's sincerity, generosity, sympathy, or even a movement of real spontaneity; and if we compare the actual facts of his life and behavior to the standards of his time and country, this continual denigration after a while becomes simply grotesque.

Indeed, there is a certain complacent cruelty in Professor Malia's whole approach that becomes quite irritating, and which derives from his superior certainty that he has "seen through" all the elaborate ideological structures of rationalization by which Herzen masked his practical impotence and futility. Time and again Professor Malia explains to us how hopeless and impossible the situation in Russia really was, and attributes to this fact the preoccupation of the Russian intelligentsia with art, idealistic philosophy, religion and such extraneous issues as the emanci-

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pation of women, when the "real" problem was to obtain some elementary civil rights for the vast majority of the people. But after showing us that such evasions were "inevitable," Professor Malia cannot resist characterizing them scornfully and ironically and continually belaboring Herzen for his incapacity to face up and "recognize reality." A good example occurs in the chapter on Herzen's exile, when he took refuge in religion, Masonic mysticism and a highly exalted correspondence with his future wife as a means of avoiding total despair. "His love went to the metaphysical lengths it did," Professor Malia comments, "because of what was grafted onto it by the frustrations of exile. Hence the association of Natalie with the idea of Providence, God, the angels, heaven, and all other conceivable occult powers necessary to save him from despair in the face of adversity. Perhaps the most preposterous aspect of the whole affair is the solicitude attributed to Providence for the welfare of the inestimable Alexander." Such a sarcastic tone, by no means uncommon in the book, is entirely out of place in this context; and Professor Malia might remember that it is unseemly even for a "social psychologist" to kick a man when he is down.

Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of Malia's theoretical approach, however, stems from the view of "reality" that it implicitly assumes. Art, speculative philosophy, religion, the problems of personal life—all these are "sublimated politics" from his angle of vision, blind alleys into which the Russian intelligentsia wandered out of practical helplessness. "Reality" thus becomes equated with pragmatic politics on the Anglo-American model; and whether intentionally or not, Professor Malia leaves the impression that every other intellectual and cultural activity or preoccupation is an "escape." But all the while he is pitilessly harrying Herzen for such "escapes from reality," one cannot help thinking that it was precisely these escapes which make Herzen so unique and attractive a figure in the gloomy gallery of Russian revolutionary fanatics.

The radicals of the 'sixties would also look on "reality" exclusively in political terms, exactly like Malia though of course with a different kind of politics in mind; and, with a more self-conscious logic, they excluded as "useless" every non-political inclination and requirement of the human spirit. Herzen was the only great radical who refused to accept this politicization of man, which has had such unhappy consequences for Russian culture as a whole. Just as in the case of Marx, whose education in the era of romantic idealism left him with a residue of respect for great art that he never lost (though he could never manage either to make it consistent with his historical materialism), so Herzen's

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similar respect for the sanctities of private feeling and the necessity of beauty derives from the depth of his involvement with all those romantic "escapes" that Professor Malia continually jibes at and decries. One of the great symbolic encounters of the modern spirit is that between Herzen and Mazzini described in *My Past and Thoughts,* where the former unsuccessfully attempts to persuade the great agitator of the importance for humanity of Leopardi's lyric cry of pain. Herzen could feel and express both the tragic human *cost* of extreme radical politics as well as its ineluctable necessity in Russia; and this is what gives him a warmth, a breadth, and a humanity that we find also in the great novelists of his generation, but which is so noticeably lacking in what Herzen called the "bilious" generation of radicals that followed.

Professor Malia's totally negative evaluation of these romantic elements of Herzen's formation constitutes, in my opinion, the single most important distortion imposed by his approach. But whatever the limitations of Professor Malia's emphasis and interpretation, they do not impair the substantial value of his first-rate study.

Joseph Frank

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POETRY CHRONICLE

THE TENNIS COURT OATH. By John Ashbery. Wesleyan University Press. $1.25.
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS. By Donald Davie. Wesleyan University Press. $1.25.
DROWNING WITH OTHERS. By James Dickey. Wesleyan University Press. $1.25.
POEMS: 1929-1961. By Francis Fergusson. Rutgers University Press. $3.50.

The idea of Form in poetry is no longer either the mystic talisman nor the red rag it used to be a few decades ago. Yet questions of form are really more obtrusive now than they were when Eliot, Blackmur, Tate et al. were breaking a lance with Romanticism.

In John Ashbery the dazzling vatic style of Dylan Thomas or Roethke's "The Shape of the Fire" has become something cool, business-like and *very* peculiar. He is listed on the jacket as an art critic for two European journals, and taking their cue from that the publishers find him a sort of Surrealist, which may be the best definition of this extreme disjointedness that looks at first like the *Angry Penguins* collages, that famous Australian hoax, but after immersion proves to have a tonal unity in no way dependent on meter or even cadence conventially understood, but rather on a cadence of feeling-sight in which things are coming apart, receding into night and distance, clouding over, or just being uncomfortable in a peculiarly sober, visionary, matter-of-fact way. The mind clutches greedily at such lines as "stones of March in the grey woods," or ". . . the darkness will have none of you, and you are folded into it like mint into the sound of haying," but is not often so rewarded.

It is not yet successful but it is interesting. There is no inevitability about it, at least to my eyes and ears, but rather an intense scholastic energy of exclusion, comparable to the Thomist energy of inclusion. If you assume, as many of Ashbery's *confrères* seem to, that poetry has degenerated into technical formulae and rhetorical gimmicks—Wilbur is perhaps the arch-villain here—then there might be a virtue in not only confounding conventional prosody and rhetoric—this had been done already—but also the progressions of mood and tone which identify a poet as a creature of conventional psychology, vulnerable to condescension. No more ranting, then, no more petulance, no more in-group coziness, no conventional movement in and out of ecstasy via epiphanies and resurrected myths, no more "music." The poem is to be philo-

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sophical, lyric, visionary, confessional and historical—all at once and uniformly. I have deduced this program myself from reading Mr. Ashbery's appallingly inconclusive verse, behind which looms the oldest Ez of the thin late *Cantos*. Unfortunately, except in master hands which have probably not yet appeared, this technique is bound to seem eventually like an exercise in defining a void, like the efforts of modern engineering to achieve a complete vacuum. Phrases, lines and whole poems are swallowed up in one's growing sense that Ashbery is preoccupied with pulling off a stunt extrinsic both to the nature of his mind, which reaches no higher, it seems to me, than "One can never change the core of things, and light burns you the harder for it," or his material, which is of a flat and rather toneless prosiness, a good deal of the time, and lapses too often into such coynesses as "The sky is a giant rockinghorse." Maybe I am needlessly ponderous, but I think Mr. Ashbery is too. I assume he has a gift or the brave, intelligent Wesleyan editors would not have published him.

Of Mr. Donald Davie's advertised technical skill in traditional meters I have little to say except that it does not seem very interesting in itself. He is a Yorkshireman, a Cambridge graduate and teacher at Cambridge, a spokesman for the group of relatively young Nonconformist university men that often appears to consist of nothing but spokesmen—the poetic face of the new English predilection for Wisdom as a national specialty. In Mr. Davie's strict stanzaic verse, elegance too frequently turns into a species of artsy-craftsy impressionism, composed of all the turns of phrase, truncated echoes, elisions and compressions that can serve to make verse sound like a triple-distilled elixir of jauntily hard-boiled authority when, in fact, it is being as inexorably governed by stanzaic requirements as the minor troubadours. Mr. Davie comes too late, it may be, in the history of English English to enjoy the naive love of elegance of an early Wilbur. To bring it off in England now, you need the mind and spirit of an Empson, which Mr. Davie does not have.

Yet his verse engaged me a good deal as another intelligent voice from the new leftish Nietzscheanism, one that has put on more protective clothing (to mix a few metaphors) and burrowed more deeply behind the gentlemanly facade than any other, and yet remains like the others obsessed with the nature of puritan Dissent; a strange mixture of nostalgia for the old luminous grimness and uneasy relief at the new ambiguity-soaked urbanity; the long shadow of D.H. Lawrence. Nearly every poem reflects this obsession: how Samuel Beckett got that way, what the poet's ancestors would have done to elegant Church of

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Ireland architecture (". . . my fathers/ Would ride again to the Boyne/ Or with scythes to Sedgemoor, or splinter/ The charming fanlights in this charming slum/ In their lights, rightly."), why Bertrand Russell's Cambridge produced no poets, and so on. On this theme he can be both witty and lower-case wise; witty in "The Evangelist", for instance:

You round upon me, generously keen:
The man, you say, is patently sincere.
Because he is so eloquent, you mean?
That test was never patented, my dear.

If, when he plays upon our sympathies,
I'm pleased to be fastidious, and you
To be inspired, the vice in it is this:
Each does us credit, and we know it too.

and wise in "The Life of Service", a poem on a horribly long-suffering, tenacious English shrub that Mr. Davie makes into a sufficiently ghastly symbol of all the ghastliness his generation has set its face against. "Dissentient Voice," a long poem in four sections, is also very good.

Ashbery and Davie are schoolmen in some distinct way. Mr. Dickey is a loner, in a tradition, of course—somewhat resembling Stevens, Jarrell, Merwin, Wright—but his emotions are often so well matched to his imagination, and expand, in many poems, so harmoniously with a vigorous and spacious play of images that the poet's relative lack of craft is more easily forgotten than another's superabundance of it.

I hope this judgment is more than prejudice in favor of Dickey's cult of nature, his deep and narrow piety for family, the dead, monogamous love, the spirit of place and the souls of animals. If I knew what was fashionable nowadays, I would call Dickey unfashionable and pat him sheepishly on the back for it. But if this is the unironized country of very early Ransom, it is also post-everybody in the degree of its freedom from echoes. Mr. Dickey is not naive; his poetry struggles to life out of uncharted depths of vacancy, perilous self-discipline and a sort of intense, pious, harmless narcissism. As often in Stevens, the minor poems seem to come only half awake; the poet sits in his trance pushing his numinous counters around the board: Light, Holiness, Fire, the Dead, Self, etc. He hunts a great deal, visits a Civil War battlefield called Nimblewill Creek with a mine-detector to exhume the dead, buries the dead on a Pacific island, cultivates pious ecstasy with a singlemindedness that makes *pius* Aeneas look like James Michael Curley. This is very American and special, to be sure. It is *echt Sewanee*

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Review. New Hampshire-born myself and bookishly trained to botanize, anatomize and ironize over nature, I am struck dumb by Dickey's deep-Dixie spiritual approach, which becomes more exotic with each new poet from those regions. He is even stranger than Randall Jarrell.

Nevertheless there is inscape here as well as landscape. "In the Lupanar at Pompeii" has a Leopardian splendor of conception; "The Hospital Window" is as good a new poem about dying as you will read this year; "The Owl King" is a charmingly solemn and touchingly grave woodland fantasy. In the long, ambitious, Thomas-like "Dover: Believing in Kings," Dickey's conversational iambic ground-tone, which can be monotonous or transparent according to whether he has anything or not to say, deepens to a fairly rugged and, at the close, powerful incantation, in which the visual, adjectival excitement, the swoop of mind through history and the gull-loud Dover landscape, mounts with a mounting sense of the occasion. It may lean too heavily on Thomas, but Thomas is still one of Dickey's liberating dead.

To have Francis Fergusson's poems together for the first time is an unclouded and long overdue pleasure. To move in Fergusson's universe of sheer, exact, humane and opulent emotions, his cold-eyed *espagnolisme* alternating with a Dantean eye for the *semina motuum,* the first things of love, death, family feeling, urban existence, his sure molding of a simple phrase and a noble stanza, is to be back in that pentecostal age of modern poetry when the life of the language lay for a while so near the surface that problems of form seemed to solve themselves with miraculous ease. To be a bit sentimental about the twenties is an overflow of mere candor when one reads Fergusson and realizes how that atmosphere shaped and sustained yet another large-minded poet whose most recent long poem, "On the Turning Earth," an elegy for his wife, printed here for the first time, is the equal of anything he has written before.

A parallel with John Peale Bishop may come closest: the debt to Eliot and the French ironists, the steep sense of honor, surgical eye for sentimentality and clinical pity for blunderers. Fergusson is gentler, though, than Eliot or Bishop, both in choice of theme and technical ambition. "On the Turning Earth" for his wife, and "A Suite for Winter" on the suicide of the son of two middle-aged friends, have a dark, even-spirited gravity all their own, as well as a precision of language that becomes, in Fergusson's hands, itself a first principle of form, which even inspires relief that nothing more intricately musical was attempted to cloud one's pleasure in Fergusson's mastery of a few very

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simple and long pondered ideas. I recommend the first of these poems especially as an example of what it means to know one's own mind on the subject of love.

To my mind the best section of the book, one that sinks piety completely in enthusiasm for a major new work, is the (undated) play *Penelope* in prose and choral verse. It dramatizes, with an economy that Pound attempted in his translation of the *Trachiniae* but somehow flubbed, the final episodes of the *Odyssey* from Odysseus's arrival in Ithaca. This is executed with a total absence of the modernizing coyness that dogs the patient Horatios of modern classical translation. And it is thoroughly and magnificently conceived in the mind's eye as a dramatic poem, by a connoisseur of dramatic action, so that one is readier to accept Fergusson classic, like the classicism of Stravinsky's *Oedipus,* as the real thing than, say, Sophocles earnestly strained through an alien language. I suspect that Fergusson's closeness in this play to what one thinks of as the Greek mind is due precisely to his extreme economy. As the Greek of Homer and the tragedians was a discovery of the language itself and a first naming of the elements of the Greek universe, Mr. Fergusson's English keeps as closely as it can to the business of naming and defining. "A-ah! Cry! Cry for joy!" is Odysseus's yell and only speech when he learns that Penelope still loves him. This noble and brilliant plainness, set against an immensely spacious emotional canvas, seems the best verbal equivalent of Stravinsky's terse savagery.

A few lines after Odysseus's yell of joy, the play closes with a true *coup de théâtre*: "Odysseus, Telemachus and Penelope clasping each other's hands in a gesture of greeting or farewell, like a bas-relief on a Greek gravestone," and only one line assigned to choral comment on the just completed action; "Hail and farewell. Odysseus. Telemachus. Penelope". The names suffice. We cannot have the ferocity or humanity without the grandeur.

R. W. Flint

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CHOOSING TO CONFORM

BEYOND CONFORMITY. By Winston White. Free Press. $5.00.

It's all a little sad! Here is the first major effort of a sociologist to analyze central themes in the thinking of contemporary American intellectuals and to understand their criticism of, and alienation from, society. Yet, the result reminds one of what it would be like to talk about color with a blind man. Winston White has conscientiously plowed through *Partisan Review, Commentary, Dissent, The American Scholar,* and *The Atlantic Monthly* in order to find out what intellectuals were thinking about in the nineteen fifties; his notes contain, literally, hundreds of references from these magazines. Leading ideas are carefully codified, classified, and mounted for display—and the end effect of all this labor is one big misunderstanding.

White classifies American intellectuals into two broad categories: the "moralizers" and the "reformers." The first are men who, like Joseph Wood Krutch, Archibald MacLeish or William H. Whyte, Jr. see modern conformity rooted in a failure of individuals and seek for a solution in the revival of an ethic of individualism. The second, men like Erich Fromm, J. K. Galbraith, Irving Howe, and the writers for *Dissent,* trace conformity to structural defaults in contemporary society and see modern man victimized by bureaucratization, mass culture, alienated labor, and the like. These ideas are sufficiently familiar to readers of *Partisan Review,* so that there is no need to spell them out in detail.

These critical views White dismisses summarily, and then counterposes his own version of panglossian sociology: The major phenomena deplored by critical intellectuals are by-products of the increasing differentiation and complexity of modern society. "Progress," he writes in an amusing, if unconscious, paraphrase of the old bolshevist simile about omelettes that cannot be made without breaking eggs, "has never been gained without cost." What the intellectuals deplore are but the transitory inconveniences of a beneficial drift which frees modern man from the narrow loyalties and constraining allegiances of simpler societies and makes available to them greater mobility and greater freedom. The complex and differentiated society which is now emerging will allow a more efficient mobilization of resources, an increased capacity to pursue whatever goals are deemed desirable, and greater freedom of choice for more individuals.

White's discussion of alienation provides a useful example of his approach. He suggests that this concept, which has, of course, been a

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major theme of cultural criticism for some hundred and fifty years, is simply based on a misunderstanding. What has been conceived as self-estrangement, loss of a sense of identity, meaninglessness, rootlessness is simply a process which has heightened man's self-consciousness and has allowed him to choose more freely among various alternatives of action and models of self-development. When men complain, for example, that the work they do has lost meaning, they forget that they now have the possibility to change jobs at will. White seems to be suggesting here that, if I complain that the pork chop I am being served in the cafeteria is unappetizing, I should consider that I have a wide range of choice between a great variety of unappetizing dishes. Only nostalgic intellectuals would apparently want to hanker back to those days when dishes were more appetizing, but the variety of choice was limited.

White faces the future with a big Hurrah. Increasing complexity and rationalization is a good thing and to doubt this is, somehow, an un-American activity. Though he has read and analyzed the works of the intellectuals in his sample, he remains almost completely unaffected by their arguments. He never asks himself, for example, whether increased functional rationality may not call forth a tendency toward irrational escapes from a world grown drab and meaningless. Karl Mannheim answered White's argument long before White advanced it, when he referred to the distinction between functional and substantial rationality. "Increasing industrialization," he wrote, "to be sure, implies functional rationality, i.e., the organization of the activity of the members of society with reference to objective ends. It does not to the same extent promote 'substantial rationality,' i.e. the capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one's own insight into the inter-relations of events." It would seem that the very increase of functional rationality in modern society has led to a decrease of substantial rationality. For modern "differentiated" man the very complexity and incalculability of the forces at work in the social system, the crises, war scares, and fears of nuclear annihilation have become as powerful sources of anxieties as the incalculable effects of nature were for the primitive. The sense of terrified helplessness which results would seem to account for the appeal of modern secular mystagogues, and political magicians. Under such circumstances, the very effect of the functional rationalization White admires so much might well be to make man ripe for the rule of a new Genghis Khan with a television set.

Furthermore, one is hard put to understand why complexity must necessarily lead to cultural efflorescence and relative simplicity to cultural stultification. It is certainly not true that, as society "progressed"

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from the simple to the complex, this has necessarily meant cultural "progress"; there is no warranty for this latter-day version of Spencerian evolutionism. It needs but little imagination to conceive of a highly efficient, functionally rational and complex society in which cultural creativity has been organized out of existence; White ought to read Eugene Zamiatin's *We*.

When White harps on the wide variety of choices now available and the differentiation of tastes this makes possible he shows a trained incapacity to understand the issue. To be sure, there are a great variety of soaps on the market and we have wide choices between various brands of breakfast foods; but what if choice is, in fact, reduced to essentially the same stuff under different labels? White confuses true differentiation and marginal differentiation; he deludes himself into believing that the choice between Wheaties and Krispies is meaningful.

Here is the schedule for the 9 to 10 P.M. prime-time period of the five existing T.V. Channels in Chicago on August 19, 1960:

9 P.M.	Twilight Zone
	Moment of Fear
	The Detective
	U.S. Marshal
	Music for a Summer Night
9:30 P.M.	Person to Person
	Black Saddle
	This Man Dawson
	Moment of Fear
	Music for a Summer Night

These were the choices for the two and a half million T.V. owners in the Metropolitan Chicago area! This is homogenization, rather than differentiation.

White serves us with a "soufflé of whipped postulates"—to borrow M. M. Postan's phrase—but seems unable to move from theory to the concrete quality of modern life. Theory ought to enrich the capacity for concrete perception; White's dessicated postulates only blur the sense of reality. And when, as in his discussion of work satisfactions, he assures us that we need not bother about reports that people find their work meaningless and demeaning, since they can, after all, get another job, his theoretical detachment becomes bland callousness and apologetics for the status quo.

In a curious way, White's argument for progress in America reminds one of certain apologists for the Soviet Union. They too often argued not so much that "what is is right," but, rather, that "what will

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be will be right." Irving Howe and I discussed this tendency some time ago, and wrote, "This worship of the putative success of the future is often evident in the work of writers who might be ashamed to argue that present might is right; they forget that the present is merely the future of the past. They will admit without hesitation the flaws in the social structure of Russia but these flaws . . . weigh rather lightly for them in the balance of History since they prepare . . . for the glories of tomorrow."

We suggested that, if judgment succumbs to the mere acceptance of the "factuality of facts," whether in the present or the future, it declines into justification. This is exactly what has happened to Winston White. And this is why, despite his undoubtedly earnest efforts, he is unable to comprehend the climate of ideas among the intellectuals he purports to study; there, apparently, exists hardly a bridge to span the chasm between critical intelligence and "theoretical" justification.

Lewis Coser

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OTHER VOICES: SOVIET COMMENT ON PR'S SPECIAL RUSSIAN ISSUE

(*The December 1961 English-language edition of the Moscow journal* Soviet Literature *contains two comments on the special issue of* Partisan Review, *"Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature" (Edited by Patricia Blake and Max Hayward, 3-4, 1961). The first is an interview with Leonid Leonov. In it the novelist does not appear to disagree with most of Hayward's analysis of his work in the introduction to "Dissonant Voices": "Leonid Leonov, easily the most distinguished and subtle of the surviving Soviet novelists, and an avowed disciple of Dostoevsky, continued to write well all during the worst period (the '30's) without unduly compromising his artistic integrity. But this was an isolated case. Leonov's rationalization of his position was based on the same sort of mystic nationalism, and probably combined with the same religious messianism, as one finds in Dostoevsky's* Diary of a Writer. *For Leonov, bolshevism is only one episode in the eternal destinies of Russia. He may have even been intrigued by the special problems of writing within the cramped confines of socialist realism and he may well have regarded his work in these conditions as a kind of* podvig (*spiritual feat*) *in the Russian Orthodox tradition."*

The second comment is a lengthy attack on the special issue, which also appeared in Novy Mir, *December, 1961, by the critic Alexander Dementiev. A reply by Max Hayward follows.—Patricia Blake.*)

INTERVIEW WITH LEONID LEONOV

We arranged our meeting by telephone and I found Leonov waiting for me in the garden. He had a healthy tan and was wearing a check-patterned summer shirt.

"Have a look round my garden," he said, "while I read the magazine. Remember, everything here has been planted by my own hands, even that birch-tree. This used to be a potato field."

Leonov settled down on a bench beside a little table while I walked off to roam through his garden—a gorgeous riot of autumnal colors. At last I heard Leonov call me gaily: "Ready."

He asked me to sit down on the bench beside him and, tracing a pattern on the sand with a twig, said:

"Well, I think there's no sense in entering into polemics over details or of refuting this or that formulation and statement. The important thing here is the authors' general approach, their attitude to us, to our

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humanism. Forgive me if I say a few very simple, maybe even banal things. But, as they say, the simpler the more effective—I said the same thing to the Americans I met last year in California.

"What, essentially, does it all add up to?

"The world was in very bad shape. In the long run it became impossible to go on living any longer in the old way. And so the common folk of Russia said: as you cannot alter anything we shall have a try at doing things in such a way that there will be less evil in life, more justice in the world. Since then our land has become a vast laboratory where a very difficult and complicated process, important for all mankind, is going on. And in so far as our literature, with all its shortcomings, is a reflection of that process it requires close and respectful study and attention.

"A subject like 'Soviet Literature 1917-1961' requires not one but several volumes of conscientious research. The anthology compiled for *Partisan Review* for all its appearance of universality reveals at the best a superficial attitude to our writings by Western students of literature. I had occasion to tell Americans personally that their interest in our literature often bore a specific character—hasn't something gone wrong somewhere in Russia. The success that *Doctor Zhivago* and *Not By Bread Alone* recently enjoyed in the West is a demonstration of really morbid interest in everything sensational and scandalous. Similarly, in the article I have just read I find, unfortunately, that a most motley collection of names is lumped carelessly together, like a lot of chemical elements of contradictory nature in one vessel (perhaps because the editors feared to attach too much importance to us).

"Last year four Soviet writers—Oles Gonchar, Stepan Shchipachov, Mukhtar Auezov and myself went to America and met a number of Americans professionally interested in literature. I felt that for them we were all as alike as two peas. They had heard about us only vaguely and, to be frank, only by what we had written thirty years ago. During our discussions on literature they kept harking back to Pasternak although on those occasions I was left with an impression that most of them had not read *Doctor Zhivago* from cover to cover."

I asked Leonov how he felt about Max Hayward's statement that he regarded his work as "a kind of *podvig* (spiritual feat) in the Russian Orthodox tradition."

"The Orthodox tradition . . ." Leonov smiled. "It seems to me there's some confusion or misunderstanding here. Perhaps Hayward is judging by the peculiarities of my language, by my constant search for verbal freshness in the roots of the language, in the genealogy of a word,

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so to speak. . . . Not for nothing did Pushkin say that the Russian language should be learned amongst the common folk.

"I grant too that Hayward may have formed his views on my work as a result of my interest—sometimes abstract, sometimes specific—in the problem of good and evil, something that was always akin to the great Russian literature of the 19th century. I said 'abstract,' because for me, I tell you confidentially, the concept of 'good' requires no supplementary adjectives. If one places before it any special attribute it can only restrict its nature. For me every weeping mother is bad and every happy child is very good (true, if its happiness is not at the expense of the happiness of another child). I also think that it would be very useful for all of us in the world if we thought more about good and evil, particularly today when we are all threatened with a common danger. It's a great pity that in literature as a whole reflections on good and evil are noticeably disappearing, that they are being replaced more and more by what I called in my *Russian Forest* 'novels on the life of flies.' It's high time for literature to start a more serious talk—in proportion to talent, of course—about general things (side by side with urgent topics), such as the future or culture or the deadly nature of our knowledge. I think that in the long run this would help people to establish the unwritten laws of life more firmly and that there'd be less need to legalize in codes that grown-up children must support their parents. . . .

"As for Max Hayward's reference to a 'kind of spiritual feat,' I hardly think he had in mind the life of St. Barbara the Martyr but I agree with the statement in so far that the work of a writer, his service to the cause of humanity, had never been easy. Concerning myself I can add that I have, indeed, always tried as honestly as possible and in the measure of my powers and understanding, to keep alight the spark of the tradition of philosophical writing, not letting it be extinguished by the rather sharp gusts of wind that have sometimes arisen. . . ."

[Here Mr. Leonov complains that the 1927 version of his novel *The Thief* recently appeared in America, instead of the edition rewritten by him twenty years later.—P. B.]

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TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD ABOUT SOVIET LITERATURE by Alexander Dementiev

In June last year a special issue of the American magazine *Atlantic* devoted to the literature and arts of our country was published with the title "The Arts in the Soviet Union." This, let us say at once, was a quite unusual event for America.

In an introduction to this number of the magazine the editor Edward Weeks described it as the "opening of a window on the present and lively arts of a talented people." And although we read in the preface that "the canons of socialist realism are foreign to our (American) way of thinking," the American readers are nevertheless told that Soviet writers have "more freedom of thought, power of expression, and diversity of sympathy" than they may have expected. One has a feeling that the editor of the *Atlantic,* having decided to acquaint Americans with the "present and lively arts of a talented people" found himself in a somewhat awkward situation: he had to come into collision with that false conception of Soviet literature which is instilled in readers by American propaganda.

But be that as it may, the special issue of the *Atlantic* turned out to be fairly objective. . . .

[Here Dementiev gives a detailed list of the contents (works by Sholokhov, Leonov, Katayev, Simonov, Fedin, etc.), more praise of the *Atlantic* for its serious objectivity, in contrast to the usual "distortions" by American scholars of Soviet literature, and, finally, an account of the "delighted" response of American readers to the Atlantic issue.— P. B.]

Let me say frankly that . . . we too were delighted by the publication of the issue of *Atlantic* devoted to the arts in Russia and we too hope that the barriers that hinder the American people from knowing the truth about the Soviet Union and Soviet literature in particular will be removed.

That is probably what is going to happen in the long run. But, "thanks to the late Senator McCarthy," not as fast as one would hope, for the motley band of the past-masters at false information are not going to surrender without a struggle. They will go on spreading all kinds of unfriendly falsehoods about our country and denigrate and slander our literature. That is shown in particular by issues 3-4 of another American magazine, the *Partisan Review,* published in the summer of

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1961. This too was a special edition devoted to Soviet literature, but how strikingly different it was than the special number of the *Atlantic!* It was titled "Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature" and while in the *Atlantic* we find the truth (even if not the whole truth), in *Partisan Review* we find nothing but falsehood.

When one comes across a publication like this special number of *Partisan Review* one usually finds oneself in an embarrassing situation. What is one to do? Argue, take issue with the writers? But how can one refute deliberate and biased fabrications which pursue aims that are obviously malicious and which have nothing in common with literature? On the other hand one has a natural desire to raise one's voice against the falsifying and distortion of Soviet literature, a desire to assist the foreign reader to remove the blinkers which people like the publishers of *Partisan Review* and the notorious "literary critics" Patricia Blake and Max Hayward, who compiled this special number, try to keep over his eyes.

In an introduction to the material compiled in this magazine we read that the main task of the editors is to show "that the Soviet period has been by no means as barren in literary achievement as is often supposed," that "there has been a steady output of work, some of which is not unworthy of the great tradition from which it ultimately springs."

Such intentions might seem to be of the best, but let the reader not leap to hasty conclusions. The editorial declaration has a special significance, hostile to Soviet literature, which is apparent to the reader the moment he examines the selection of material published in the magazine.

What are the works which are worthy of the great tradition of the Russian classics? One would naturally expect this to be the writings of such authors as Gorky, Mayakovsky, Alexei Tolstoy, Fadeyev. But this is not what the editors of *Partisan Review* think. There is nothing in the magazine either of the prominent present-day Soviet writers whom the editors of the *Atlantic* considered it fully reasonable to include: Mikhail Sholokhov, Alexander Tvardovsky, Konstantin Fedin, Leonid Leonov, Samuel Marshak, Valentin Katayev, etc. Yet how can a picture of Soviet literature be presented without them?

On the other hand, the magazine prints Boris Pasternak's decadent study *Without Love* which passed quite unnoticed when it first appeared in 1918 and has since been deservedly forgotten but which appealed to Max Hayward and Patricia Blake for containing in embryo the central idea of *Doctor Zhivago*; a short article by Evgeni Zamyatin entitled "On Literature, Revolution and Entropy"; Boris Pilnyak's notorious story

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Mahogany and extracts from the poorest book Mikhail Zoshchenko ever wrote—*Before Sunrise*. But what connection have any of these works with the great tradition of the Soviet classics?

It is clear that the editors were quite indifferent to the quality of the writing or the literary level of the works they selected. For them something else was important: to discover the "dissonant" works in Soviet literature and in passing them off for manifestations of the great traditions of Russian classical literature to slander the entire treasury of Soviet literature. . . .

It goes without saying that had they wished the editors of this special edition of *Partisan Review* could have found even more "dissonant voices" in our literature, especially in that of the twenties. Soviet literature took shape in a process of severe class struggle when the remnants of capitalism and other alien ideological influences were being overcome. Naturally, various "dissonant voices" were to be heard in our literature. But for the sake of truth the editors should have noted at least three facts: 1) such voices were raised on the fringe of the main trend of Soviet literature; 2) gradually they grew scarcer in number; 3) these "voices" never sang anything of the least artistic value, which is not surprising since to sing out of tune in our conditions means to be out of harmony with truth, humanism and progress. . . .

Aware of the fact that *Without Love, Mahogany* and *Before Sunrise* were not sufficient ingredients to "cook the porridge," the editors decided to supplement them with excerpts from the memoirs of Konstantin Paustovsky and Ilya Ehrenburg, Alexander Grin's story *The Making of Asper,* Isaac Babel's *The Journey,* Sergei Esenin's poem *Soviet Russia,* and extracts from Lev Kassil's book *My Dear Boys,* Julia Neiman's poem *1941* and Vladimir Polyakov's humorous sketch *Fireman Prokhorchuk.* Naturally, these additions add bulk to the special edition of *Partisan Review* but make it even less convincing and show only the editors' complete lack of elementary taste and of any understanding of Soviet literature. Only by that is to be explained the absurd juxtaposition of Esenin's well-known *Soviet Russia* with a work so completely unknown in the Soviet Union as the poem of Julia Neiman, of the stories selected from the works of Grin and Babel with the short-lived sketch by Polyakov. But the main point is that the editors display flagrant dishonesty in presenting *Soviet Russia,* the memoirs of Paustovsky and Ehrenburg, Kassil's story *My Dear Boys* and other works as "dissonant voices" in Soviet literature, printing them side by side with Pilnyak's *Mahogany,* Zamyatin's malicious article or Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise* which met with a critical reception by the Soviet public. We consider the memoirs

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of Paustovsky and Ehrenburg are controversial, some objections have been raised to certain passages in those works but it would never occur to anyone to classify them as "dissonant voices" that is, works foreign to Soviet literature. The editors of *Partisan Review* have resorted to an artificial dressing of the memoirs of Paustovsky and Ehrenburg, extracting from them passages that are far from the most typical. However even this operation does not help them to turn white into black. . . .

Max Hayward's survey "Soviet Literature 1917-1961" not only fails to save the situation but on the contrary aggravates the false bias that is to be seen in the selection of the literary "illustrations."

Max Hayward's article repeats all the hackneyed fabrications of Gleb Struve, Ernest Simmons, George Gibian and other "experts" on Soviet literature. Like them he is silent about the work of Gorky, paints the NEP years as a golden age of Soviet letters and tries in every way to discredit the literature of the thirties and forties, attempting to set up Blok, Esenin and even Mayakovsky against the Revolution and socialism and to wrench Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, the works of Leonov and Ehrenburg out of Soviet literature. And he does this without adducing any proof, without producing any evidence, without any analysis—even the most fleeting or superficial—of the novels, short stories, poems or plays written by Soviet authors. . . .

[Dementiev here attacks Hayward for not dealing with genuine Soviet literature (the "non-dissonant voices"), and for alleging that there exists in the Soviet Union an absence of freedom which impedes the development of literature. He is further criticised for resorting to mere gossip: to studying life "through the keyhole" when he writes that a battle is in progress between neo-Stalinists and liberals among the intelligentsia. —P. B.]

It is patently clear that Hayward's article and the entire special edition of *Partisan Review* set themselves the task not of acquainting the reader with Soviet literature but on the contrary of doing everything possible to misinform and mislead him. I shall give a few more examples to show the low level of Max Hayward's performance and the poverty of the stock of knowledge with which he is provided for throwing light on the history of Soviet literature.

1. The enormous importance that Lenin's essay *Party Literature and the Party Organization* has for our literature is well known. In his article Hayward says that it was written in 1906 and that in talking of "literature" Lenin was not specifically referring to *"belles-lettres."* Actually Lenin's work was published in November 1905, but this is, of course, a

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slight inaccuracy, as to whether he referred to *"belles-lettres"* or not, let the reader judge for himself. "Are you free in relation to your bourgeois publisher, Mr. Writer?" Lenin asks. And he replies: "One cannot live in society and be free of society. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actress is simply masked (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the money-bags, corruption, on prostitution." Let the reader read this short essay of Lenin's attentively and he will see that the view of it, which Hayward has borrowed from the revisionists, is quite incorrect.

2. A very important role was played in the history of Soviet literature by the Central Committee's decree of April 23, 1932, on the reorganization of literary and artistic organizations. As we know, this decree was connected with the growth of Soviet society, the strengthening of the moral and political unity of the Soviet people and the transition of all our intelligentsia to a socialist position. In such conditions there was no longer any need to preserve the Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP). This association was disbanded and in its place a single Union of Soviet Writers was founded. The disbanding of RAPP was preceded by severe criticism of it on the pages of the Party press—beginning in 1929-1930. Max Hayward either does not know this or deliberately keeps his knowledge to himself. He writes in his article that the Central Committee's decree was unexpected, in other words, that the Party had been hitherto giving RAPP its unqualified support. Of the reasons for disbanding RAPP he has nothing to say except to advance the fantastic theory that the members of RAPP were not to Stalin's liking for temperamental reasons. Such nonsense is passed off as the history of Soviet literature.

3. Max Hayward asserts that after the Central Committee's decree about the magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* Soviet literature more or less ceased to exist and that the period 1947-1953 was known in the history of Soviet literature as one of "utter sterility." The same thing, we note, is said by George Gibian. But if we put these assertions to the test we discover that it was precisely during that period that the following writers made their way into Soviet literature: Vera Panova, Galina Nikolayeva, Mikhail Bubennov, Vasili Azhayev, Boris Polevoy, Victor Nekrasov, Valentin Ovechkin, Vsevolod Kochetov, Emmanuil Kazakevich, Sergei Antonov, Daniil Granin, Mikhail Lukonin, Alexei Nedogonov, Sergei Orlov, Konstantin Vanshenkin and many other writers well known both in the Soviet Union and abroad, that it was in those very years too that were published Konstantin Fedin's two-volume novel *First Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer,* Leonid Leonov's *Russian Forest,* Fyodor Gladkov's trilogy, several of Ilya Ehrenburg's novels, Mikhail Prishvin's

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last tales, and Alexander Tvardovsky's poem *The House by the Road.* And, moreover, that this period saw the growth of the literature of all the nationalities of the Soviet Union. . . .

4. As I have said above, Max Hayward, like Struve, Simmons and the like, try to present the best works of our literature as being alien to the Soviet regime and Soviet culture. But they do this quite arbitrarily and without adducing any proofs. It suffices to say that Hayward takes the information about Blok from Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise* while to Leonid Leonov he attributes a religious messianism and makes of him a follower of the traditions of Russian Orthodoxy. But perhaps the most sensational of all Hayward's "discoveries" is to find in contemporary literature a number of works that he calls "literary zubatovism," that is, works aiming to neutralize the effect of the true writers of the "thaw." In other words Hayward cannot admit that there are any honest writers in the Soviet Union. Some adapted themselves, others wrote maliciously on the sly, while a third group took the path of literary "zubatovism," and so on. In this context one cannot help remembering the "commendable though rather short" remark of Sobakevich in Gogol's *Dead Souls* about the officials of the provincial town of N.: "There is only one decent man among them, the prosecutor, and he is a pig, to tell the truth." It is with this attitude to our writers that Max Hayward takes up his pen to write about Soviet literature. And in such a case what can one expect from that pen besides slander and falsification?

Yes, Patricia Blake and Max Hayward chose to play unseemly roles. Instead of contributing to the friendship and cultural links between countries they are trying to sow enmity between them.

IN REPLY

Mr. Dementiev's article attacking the special issue of *Partisan Review* on Soviet literature is reproduced here primarily as an interesting specimen of a certain style of Soviet polemics, which is now happily rarer than it used to be. The victims of such attacks in the Soviet Union itself now fortunately have less to fear than was the case some ten years ago when Mr. Dementiev and his like could rely on full support from the "secular arm." The editors feel constrained to reply to a few of the points, only in so far as their goodwill and competence as observers of the Soviet literary scene are called in question. We may hope that this comment will eventually reach some of those many Soviet

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intellectuals whose assessment of Soviet literary matters is undoubtedly closer to ours than to Mr. Dementiev's.

It is not surprising that Dementiev takes exception to our selection since our frankly declared aim, for which we see no reason to apologize, was to give pride of place to Soviet writers who at various times have been hounded into silence (Pasternak), murdered (Pilnyak and Babel), or otherwise persecuted, i.e. such writers who, in Mr. Dementiev's phrase, "gradually grew scarcer in number." To these we added some other writers, such as Paustovsky, who have courageously, though unobtrusively, resisted the overwhelming pressures to conform, and Ehrenburg, who since Stalin's death has done more than anyone to dismantle the literary orthodoxy so tenaciously adhered to by the dwindling minority of whom Mr. Dementiev is a conspicuous representative.

Dementiev's point about our interpretation of Lenin's article "Party Literature and Party Organization" is perhaps the most important of his remarks, since it is central to the literary doctrine which led to the suppression of so many "dissonant voices" (and what is literature but dissonance?) in what Mr. Dementiev and his friends quaintly refer to as the "period of the cult of personality." An attentive reader of Lenin's article will see that it does not *primarily* concern *belles-lettres* (my use of the word "specifically" was wrong). When Lenin speaks of literature and literateurs, he has in mind mainly what we would call publicists. An article by Y. M. Strachkov in *Questions of History* of April 1956, a careful study of the genesis of Lenin's essay shows that Lenin was thinking of such "literateurs as Akselrod, Martov, Parvus, Trotsky, Potresov and Plekhanov." Lenin was at the time concerned about the lack of party discipline displayed by intellectual "supermen," and he demanded that they become "screws and cogs" in the social-democrat mechanism. It may be true, as Dementiev says, that the article could be held to apply to any kind of creative writing, but this is not the main point, since the use of the article by Zhdanov in 1934 as the principal justification for the submission of *all* writers and artists to rigid party discipline was, as we said, an unscruplous abuse of Lenin's words, which were written, it must be remembered, in completely different historical circumstances from those existing in 1934. Lenin was writing at a time when *several* parties existed, and was only insisting, quite reasonably, that people who wrote in social-democrat organs should submit themselves to party discipline. At that time, after all, they had a freedom of choice, and acceptance of such discipline was voluntary. The important passage in Lenin's article, which Zhdanov ignored, is the following: "Everybody is free to write and say what he pleases, without the slightest restrictions.

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But every free association (and a party too) is also free to expel such members who use the party's platform to preach anti-party views. Freedom of speech and of the press must be absolute. But the freedom of association must also be absolute." By 1934, as Mr. Dementiev should know, there was no longer freedom of association in the Soviet Union, nor is there to this day. It disappeared together with freedom of speech and freedom of the press, for which Lenin was so concerned, in 1905 (not as Mr. Dementiev rightly points out in 1906). The part of Lenin's article which appears to appeal mostly to Mr. Dementiev is the one which refers to literary prostitution in the West. Literary prostitution is no doubt a feature of all societies, but at least literary prostitutes in countries not controlled by a single party have a wide choice of clients; and it is even possible for those who wish to tread the path of what they hold to be virtue.

Dementiev says that the dissolution of RAPP did not come out of the blue and was preceded by criticism in the party press beginning in 1929-1930. We have no knowledge of such criticism, and would be glad to have examples from Dementiev, particularly for the years 1929-1930, in which we seem to remember RAPP was so all-powerful that even the great Mayakovsky was forced to abandon his own literary organization and apply for membership in RAPP.

Dementiev's objection to our statement that the period 1947-1953 was one of "utter sterility" scarcely needs a reply. It is true that some of the people he mentions did indeed "make their way" into Soviet literature during this period, and that some of them, like Vera Panova and Victor Nekrasov, have emerged as writers of stature since Stalin's death, but what they wrote during the last years of his life was, through no fault of theirs, scarcely a major contribution to letters. If Dementiev imagines that Vsevolod Kochetov, who made his debut in this period, is to be regarded as anything but a linear descendant of Grech and Bulgarin, then his sense of literary values and of elementary human decency must indeed be atrophied.

Finally we must comment on the offensive remark at the end of Dementiev's article in which he implies that we have nothing but contempt for Soviet writers and for Soviet literature as a whole. In fact the whole point of our anthology and of the introduction was to illustrate as vividly as possible to American and English readers that the majority of Soviet writers, with certain notorious exceptions, have courageously maintained the high standards of their tradition.

Max Hayward

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CORRESPONDENCE

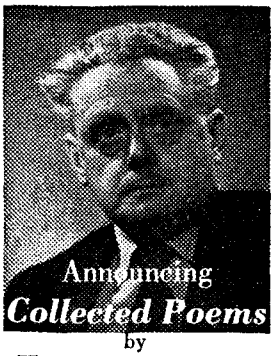
NUCLEAR MORALITY

Sirs:

For several reasons I can address myself only to the two last questions in the Winter Issue of this magazine. They read, Number 6: "Do you think the advance of Communism can be stopped without nuclear conflict?" Number 7: "Do you think the issues at stake in the cold war, so decisive as to be, worth a nuclear war?" The preceding questions (Numbers 1-5) deal predominantly with matters of political judgement and could be answered by me only in terms of a sparsely informed opinion, but not of a basic conviction.

My conviction is that it is ethically not permissible to enter a war with the intention to use nuclear weapons first. The ethical reason is that a war, fought with nuclear weapons, can, by its very nature, never attain the goal for which it is fought. Its result is mutual destruction and neither the preservation of freedom nor the victory of Communism. Therefore, the question asked under Number 7 cannot be answered. No issue at stake is worth a war which involves self-destruction and in which the issues at stake would be annihilated together with those for whom they are issues.

It may be—this is a military judgement—that the advance of Communism could not be stopped with conventional weapons in the present moment. This does not mean that the West has subjected itself to Communism. It only means that the West has to acknowledge a temporary military superiority of the armies which fight for Communism. But a temporary superiority is not a definite one. And, in the long run, the military strength of the West is superior to that of the Communists—



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without atomic weapons. All this does not mean that the West has to announce its intention not to use atomic weapons first. It might be possible and useful to keep the Communist in uncertainty about what we intend to do. But if this is not possible, it is better to declare solemnly that we shall not use atomic weapons first. It is highly improbable that the Russians, after such a declaration, would use them.

But if they intend to do so, they must know that this means for them also total self-destruction. Our intention to answer any nuclear attack with nuclear weapons must be absolutely clear, and it must be also clear that we have the power to do so. Therefore, nuclear armament is necessary as long as there is no general nuclear disarmament.

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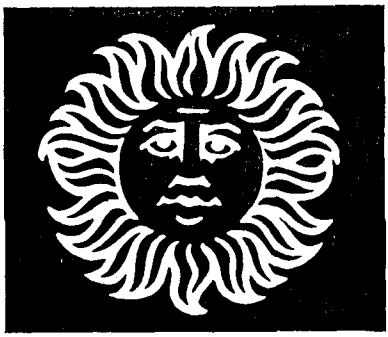

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